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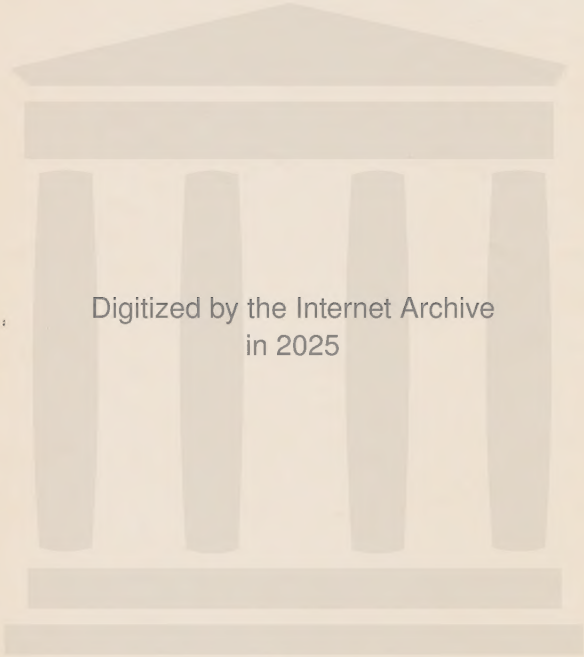
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LOVE COMES RIDING

See page 308

"LOOK! . . . OUT THERE! BEYOND!"

LOVE COMES RIDING

STORIES OF ROMANCE AND ADVENTURE FOR GIRLS

Collected by Helen Ferris

ILLUSTRATED BY

Beth Krebs Morris

j7417l

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THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

by Robert Louis Stevenson

His grandfather erected lighthouses that became famous. His father was the distinguished Scotch engineer who perfected the revolving light. But even before he understood what they meant, Robert Louis Stevenson was fascinated by the sound of the words in the poems his nurse, Allison Cunningham, recited to him. By the time he was six, he was making up plays and acting them, his favorite plot teeming with dragons.

During his boyhood, Louis was taken on many trips to the Continent. When he was only twelve, he traveled from London to Edinburgh alone. It did not occur to him to be afraid, he was so interested in the people he met and what was going on around him. As long as he lived and wherever he went, he kept this same eager interest.

He was often ill, but the long periods of convalescence had one advantage—they gave him hours in which to read his beloved books and to write down his stories and his fancies. When he was fourteen, he composed the libretto of an opera called *The Baneful Potato.* He was forever starting magazines, writing stories for them that were filled with action, one of the most exciting being the adventures of a hero who was hidden in a boiler under which a fire was later lighted! But he was interested, too, in using words as beautifully as possible, and when he took a walk by himself he constantly tried to think of those that would describe what he was seeing and feeling.

By the time he was seventeen, he sincerely wished to become a writer. Yet when he completed his preparatory work, he was sent to the University of Edinburgh to study engineering. He was not happy. And when, at last, he was twenty-one, he told his father he must write. From then on, he was steadfast to this purpose. Despite continued illness, despite privations, despite a discouraging search for health in many parts of the world, he valiantly held to his work. He never lost his first love of words —or of people or of places. And when he died on one of the South Sea islands, he left us *Treasure Island, New Arabian Nights,* from which *The Sire De Malétroit's Door* is taken, and many other cherished books.

THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

By Robert Louis Stevenson

DENIS DE BEAULIEU was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct; his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind. The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a

black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he said good-bye upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Château Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Château Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clew to go upon he stumbled and groped forward, now breathing more freely in open places where there was a good slice of sky overhead, now feeling along the wall in stifling closes. It is an eerie and mysterious position to be thus submerged in opaque blackness in an almost unknown town. The silence is terrifying in its possibilities. The touch of cold window bars to the exploring hand startles the man like the touch of a toad; the inequalities of the pavement shake his heart into his mouth; a piece of denser darkness threatens an ambuscade or a chasm in the pathway; and where the air is brighter, the houses put on strange and bewildering

appearances, as if to lead him farther from his way. For Denis, who had to regain his inn without attracting notice, there was real danger as well as mere discomfort in the walk; and he went warily and boldly at once, and at every corner paused to make an observation.

He had been for some time threading a lane so narrow that he could touch a wall with either hand, when it began to open out and go sharply downward. Plainly this lay no longer in the direction of his inn; but the hope of a little more light tempted him forward to reconnoiter. The lane ended in a terrace with a bartizan wall, which gave an outlook between high houses, as out of an embrasure, into the valley lying dark and formless several hundred feet below. Denis looked down, and could discern a few tree-tops waving and a single speck of brightness where the river ran across a weir. The weather was clearing up, and the sky had lightened, so as to show the outline of the heavier clouds and the dark margin of the hills. By the uncertain glimmer, the house on his left hand should be a place of some pretensions; it was surmounted by several pinnacles and turret-tops; the round stern of a chapel, with a fringe of flying buttresses, projected boldly from the main block; and the door was sheltered under a deep porch carved with figures and overhung by two long gargoyles. The windows of the chapel gleamed through their intricate tracery with a light as of many tapers, and threw out the buttresses and the peaked roof in a more intense blackness against the sky. It was plainly the hotel of some great family of the neighborhood; and as it reminded Denis of a town house of his own at Bourges, he stood for some time gazing up at it and

mentally gauging the skill of the architects and the consideration of the two families.

There seemed to be no issue to the terrace but the lane by which he had reached it; he could only retrace his steps, but he had gained some notion of his whereabouts, and hoped by this means to hit the main thoroughfare and speedily regain the inn. He was reckoning without that chapter of accidents which was to make this night memorable above all others in his career; for he had not gone back above a hundred yards before he saw a light coming to meet him, and heard loud voices speaking together in the echoing of the lane. It was a party of men-at-arms going the night round with torches. Denis assured himself that they had all been making free with the wine-bowl, and were in no mood to be particular about safe-conducts or the niceties of chivalrous war. It was as like as not that they would kill him like a dog and leave him where he fell. The situation was inspiriting but nervous. Their own torches would conceal him from sight, he reflected; and he hoped that they would drown the noise of his footsteps with their own empty voices. If he were but fleet and silent, he might evade their notice altogether.

Unfortunately, as he turned to beat a retreat, his foot rolled upon a pebble; he fell against the wall with an ejaculation, and his sword rang loudly on the stones. Two or three voices demanded who went there—some in French, some in English; but Denis made no reply, and ran the faster down the lane. Once upon the terrace, he paused to look back. They still kept calling after him, and just then began to double the pace in pursuit, with a considerable clank of armor, and great

tossing of the torchlight to and fro in the narrow jaws of the passage.

Denis cast a look around and darted into the porch. There he might escape observation, or—if that were too much to expect—was in a capital posture whether for parley or defense. So thinking, he drew his sword and tried to set his back against the door. To his surprise, it yielded behind his weight; and though he turned in a moment, continued to swing back on oiled and noiseless hinges, until it stood wide open on a black interior. When things fall out opportunely for the person concerned, he is not apt to be critical about the how or why, his own immediate personal convenience seeming a sufficient reason for the strangest oddities and revolutions in our sublunary things; and so Denis, without a moment's hesitation, stepped within and partly closed the door behind him to conceal his place of refuge. Nothing was further from his thoughts than to close it altogether; but for some inexplicable reason —perhaps by a spring or a weight—the ponderous mass of oak whipped itself out of his fingers and clanked to, with a formidable rumble and a noise like the falling of an automatic bar.

The round, at that very moment, debouched upon the terrace and proceeded to summon him with shouts and curses. He heard them ferreting in the dark corners; the stock of a lance even rattled along the outer surface of the door behind which he stood; but these gentlemen were in too high a humor to be long delayed, and soon made off down a corkscrew pathway which had escaped Denis's observation, and passed out of sight and hearing along the battlements of the town.

Denis breathed again. He gave them a few minutes'

grace for fear of accidents, and then groped about for some means of opening the door and slipping forth again. The inner surface was quite smooth, not a handle, not a molding, not a projection of any sort. He got his finger-nails round the edges and pulled, but the mass was immovable. He shook it, it was as firm as a rock. Denis de Beaulieu frowned and gave vent to a little noiseless whistle. What ailed the door? he wondered. Why was it open? How came it to shut so easily and so effectually after him? There was something obscure and underhand about all this that was little to the young man's fancy. It looked like a snare; and yet who would suppose a snare in such a quiet by-street and in a house of so prosperous and even noble an exterior? And yet—snare or no snare, intentionally or unintentionally—here he was, prettily trapped; and for the life of him he could see no way out of it again. The darkness began to weigh upon him. He gave ear; all was silent without, but within and close by he seemed to catch a faint sighing, a faint sobbing rustle, a little stealthy creak—as though many persons were at his side, holding themselves quite still, and governing even their respiration with the extreme of slyness. The idea went to his vitals with a shock, and he faced about suddenly as if to defend his life. Then, for the first time, he became aware of a light about the level of his eyes and at some distance in the interior of the house—a vertical thread of light, widening towards the bottom, such as might escape between two wings of arras over a doorway. To see anything was a relief to Denis; it was like a piece of solid ground to a man laboring in a morass; his mind seized upon it with avidity; and he stood star-

ing at it and trying to piece together some logical conception of his surroundings. Plainly there was a flight of steps ascending from his own level to that of this illuminated doorway; and indeed he thought he could make out another thread of light, as fine as a needle and as faint as phosphorescence, which might very well be reflected along the polished wood of a handrail. Since he had begun to suspect that he was not alone, his heart had continued to beat with smothering violence, and an intolerable desire for action of any sort had possessed itself of his spirit. He was in deadly peril, he believed. What could be more natural than to mount the staircase, lift the curtain, and confront his difficulty at once? At least he would be dealing with something tangible; at least he would be no longer in the dark. He stepped slowly forward with outstretched hands, until his foot struck the bottom step; then he rapidly scaled the stairs, stood for a moment to compose his expression, lifted the arras and went in.

He found himself in a large apartment of polished stone. There were three doors; one on each of three sides; all similarly curtained with tapestry. The fourth side was occupied by two large windows and a great stone chimney-piece, carved with the arms of the Malétroits. Denis recognized the bearings, and was gratified to find himself in such good hands. The room was strongly illuminated; but it contained little furniture except a heavy table and a chair or two, the hearth was innocent of fire, and the pavement was but sparsely strewn with rushes clearly many days old.

On a high chair beside the chimney, and directly facing Denis as he entered, sat a little old gentleman in

a fur tippet. He sat with his legs crossed and his hands folded, and a cup of spiced wine stood by his elbow on a bracket on the wall. His countenance had a strongly masculine cast; not properly human, but such as we see in the bull, the goat, or the domestic boar; something equivocal and wheedling, something greedy, brutal, and dangerous. The upper lip was inordinately full, as though swollen by a blow or a toothache; and the smile, the peaked eyebrows, and the small, strong eyes were quaintly and almost comically evil in expression. Beautiful white hair hung straight all round his head, like a saint's, and fell in a single curl upon the tippet. His beard and mustache were the pink of venerable sweetness. Age, probably in consequence of inordinate precautions, had left no mark upon his hands; and the Malétroit hand was famous. It would be difficult to imagine anything at once so fleshy and so delicate in design; the tapering, sensual fingers were like those of one of Leonardo's women; the fork of the thumb made a dimpled protuberance when closed; the nails were perfectly shaped, and of a dead, surprising whiteness. It rendered his aspect tenfold more redoubtable, that a man with hands like these should keep them devoutly folded in his lap like a virgin martyr—that a man with so intense and startling an expression of face should sit patiently on his seat and contemplate people with an unwinking stare, like a god, or a god's statue. His quiescence seemed ironical and treacherous, it fitted so poorly with his looks.

Such was Alain, Sire de Malétroit.

Denis and he looked silently at each other for a second or two.

"Pray step in," said the Sire de Malétroit. "I have been expecting you all the evening."

He had not risen, but he accompanied his words with a smile and a slight but courteous inclination of the head. Partly from the smile, partly from the strange musical murmur with which the Sire prefaced his observation, Denis felt a strong shudder of disgust go through his marrow. And what with disgust and honest confusion of mind, he could scarcely get words together in reply.

"I fear," he said, "that this is a double accident. I am not the person you suppose me. It seems you were looking for a visit; but for my part, nothing was further from my thoughts—nothing could be more contrary to my wishes—than this intrusion."

"Well, well," replied the old gentleman indulgently, "here you are, which is the main point. Seat yourself, my friend, and put yourself entirely at your ease. We shall arrange our little affairs presently."

Denis perceived that the matter was still complicated with some misconception, and he hastened to continue his explanations.

"Your door . . ." he began.

"About my door?" asked the other, raising his peaked eyebrows. "A little piece of ingenuity." And he shrugged his shoulders. "A hospitable fancy! By your own account, you were not desirous of making my acquaintance. We old people look for such reluctance now and then; and when it touches our honor, we cast about until we find some way of overcoming it. You arrive uninvited, but believe me, very welcome."

"You persist in error, sir," said Denis. "There can

be no question between you and me. I am a stranger in this countryside. My name is Denis, damoiseau de Beaulieu. If you see me in your house, it is only—"

"My young friend," interrupted the other, "you will permit me to have my own ideas on that subject. They probably differ from yours at the present moment," he added with a leer, "but time will show which of us is in the right."

Denis was convinced he had to do with a lunatic. He seated himself with a shrug, content to wait the upshot; and a pause ensued, during which he thought he could distinguish a hurried gabbling as of prayer from behind the arras immediately opposite him. Sometimes there seemed to be but one person engaged, sometimes two; and the vehemence of the voice, low as it was, seemed to indicate either great haste or an agony of spirit. It occurred to him that this piece of tapestry covered the entrance to the chapel he had noticed from without.

The old gentleman meanwhile surveyed Denis from head to foot with a smile, and from time to time emitted little noises like a bird or a mouse, which seemed to indicate a high degree of satisfaction. This state of matters became rapidly insupportable; and Denis, to put an end to it, remarked politely that the wind had gone down.

The old gentleman fell into a fit of silent laughter, so prolonged and violent that he became quite red in the face. Denis got upon his feet at once, and put on his hat with a flourish.

"Sir," he said, "if you are in your wits, you have affronted me grossly. If you are out of them, I flatter

myself I can find better employment for my brains than to talk with lunatics. My conscience is clear; you have made a fool of me from the first moment; you have refused to hear my explanations; and now there is no power under God will make me stay here any longer; and if I cannot make my way out in a more decent fashion, I will hack your door in pieces with my sword."

The Sire de Malétroit raised his right hand and wagged it at Denis with the fore and little fingers extended.

"My dear nephew," he said, "sit down."

"Nephew!" retorted Denis. "You lie in your throat;" and he snapped his fingers in his face.

"Sit down, you rogue!" cried the old gentleman, in a sudden harsh voice, like the barking of a dog. "Do you fancy," he went on, "that when I had made my little contrivance for the door I had stopped short with that? If you prefer to be bound hand and foot till your bones ache, rise and try to go away. If you choose to remain a free young buck, agreeably conversing with an old gentleman—why, sit where you are in peace, and God be with you."

"Do you mean I am a prisoner?" demanded Denis.

"I state the facts," replied the other. "I would rather leave the conclusion to yourself."

Denis sat down again. Externally he managed to keep pretty calm; but within, he was now boiling with anger, now chilled with apprehension. He no longer felt convinced that he was dealing with a madman. And if the old gentleman was sane, what, in God's name, had he to look for? What absurd or tragical

adventure had befallen him? What countenance was he to assume?

While he was thus unpleasantly reflecting, the arras that overhung the chapel door was raised, and a tall priest in his robes came forth and, giving a long, keen stare at Denis, said something in an undertone to Sire de Malétroit.

"She is in a better frame of spirit?" asked the latter.

"She is more resigned, messire," replied the priest.

"Now the Lord help her, she is hard to please!" sneered the old gentleman. "A likely stripling—not ill-born—and of her own choosing, too? Why, what more would the jade have?"

"The situation is not usual for a young damsel!" said the other, "and somewhat trying to her blushes."

"She should have thought of that before she began the dance. It was none of my choosing, God knows that: but since she is in it, by our Lady, she shall carry it to the end." And then addressing Denis, "Monsieur de Beaulieu," he asked, "may I present you to my niece? She has been waiting your arrival, I may say, with even greater impatience than myself."

Denis had resigned himself with a good grace—all he desired was to know the worst of it as speedily as possible; so he rose at once, and bowed in acquiescence. The Sire de Malétroit followed his example and limped, with the assistance of the chaplain's arm, towards the chapel door. The priest pulled aside the arras, and all three entered. The building had considerable architectural pretensions. A light groining sprang from six stout columns, and hung down in two rich pendants from the center of the vault. The place terminated

behind the altar in a round end, embossed and honeycombed with a superfluity of ornament in relief, and pierced by many little windows shaped like stars, trefoils, or wheels. These windows were imperfectly glazed, so that the night air circulated freely in the chapel. The tapers, of which there must have been half a hundred burning on the altar, were unmercifully blown about; and the light went through many different phases of brilliancy and semi-eclipse. On the steps in front of the altar knelt a young girl richly attired as a bride. A chill settled over Denis as he observed her costume; he fought with desperate energy against the conclusion that was thrust upon his mind; it could not—it should not—be as he feared.

"Blanche," said the Sire, in his most flute-like tones, "I have brought a friend to see you, my little girl; turn round and give him your pretty hand. It is good to be devout; but it is necessary to be polite, my niece."

The girl rose to her feet and turned towards the newcomers. She moved all of a piece; and shame and exhaustion were expressed in every line of her fresh young body; and she held her head down and kept her eyes upon the pavement, as she came slowly forward. In the course of her advance, her eyes fell upon Denis de Beaulieu's feet—feet of which he was justly vain, be it remarked, and wore in the most elegant accouterment even while traveling. She paused—started, as if his yellow boots had conveyed some shocking meaning—and glanced suddenly up into the wearer's countenance. Their eyes met; shame gave place to horror and terror in her looks; the blood left her lips; with a piercing

scream she covered her face with her hands and sank upon the chapel floor.

"That is not the man!" she cried. "My uncle, that is not the man!"

The Sire de Malétroit chirped agreeably. "Of course not," he said; "I expected as much. It was so unfortunate you could not remember his name."

"Indeed," she cried, "indeed, I have never seen this person till this moment—have never so much as set eyes upon him—I never wish to see him again. Sir," she said, turning to Denis, "if you are a gentleman, you will bear me out. Have I ever seen you—have you ever seen me—before this accursed hour?"

"To speak for myself, I have never had that pleasure," answered the young man. "This is the first time, messire, that I have met with your engaging niece."

The old gentleman shrugged his shoulders.

"I am distressed to hear it," he said. "But it is never too late to begin. I had little more acquaintance with my own late lady ere I married her; which proves," he added with a grimace, "that these impromptu marriages may often produce an excellent understanding in the long run. As the bridegroom is to have a voice in the matter, I will give him two hours to make up for lost time before we proceed with the ceremony." And he turned towards the door, followed by the clergyman.

The girl was on her feet in a moment. "My uncle, you cannot be in earnest," she said. "I declare before God I will stab myself rather than be forced on that young man. The heart rises at it; God forbid such marriages; you dishonor your white hair. Oh, my uncle,

"THAT IS NOT THE MAN, MY UNCLE!"

pity me! There is not a woman in all the world but would prefer death to such a nuptial. Is it possible," she added, faltering, "is it possible that you do not believe me—that you still think this"—and she pointed at Denis with a tremor of anger and contempt—"that you still think *this* to be the man?"

"Frankly," said the old gentleman, pausing on the threshold, "I do. But let me explain to you once for all, Blanche de Malétroit, my way of thinking about this affair. When you took it into your head to dishonor my family and the name that I have borne, in peace and war, for more than three-score years, you forfeited, not only the right to question my designs, but that of looking me in the face. If your father had been alive, he would have spat on you and turned you out of doors. His was the hand of iron. You may bless your God you have only to deal with the hand of velvet, mademoiselle. It was my duty to get you married without delay. Out of pure goodwill, I have tried to find your own gallant for you. And I believe I have succeeded. But before God and all the holy angels, Blanche de Malétroit, if I have not, I care not one jackstraw. So let me recommend you to be polite to our young friend; for upon my word, your next groom may be less appetizing."

And with that he went out, with the chaplain at his heels; and the arras fell behind the pair.

The girl turned upon Denis with flashing eyes.

"And what, sir," she demanded, "may be the meaning of all this?"

"God knows," returned Denis gloomily. "I am a prisoner in this house, which seems full of mad peo-

ple. More I know not; and nothing do I understand."

"And pray how came you here?" she asked.

He told her as briefly as he could. "For the rest," he added, "perhaps you will follow my example, and tell me the answer to all these riddles, and what, in God's name, is like to be the end of it."

She stood silent for a little, and he could see her lips tremble and her tearless eyes burn with a feverish luster. Then she pressed her forehead in both hands.

"Alas, how my head aches!" she said wearily—"to say nothing of my poor heart! But it is due to you to know my story, unmaidenly as it must seem. I am called Blanche de Malétroit; I have been without father or mother for—oh! for as long as I can recollect, and indeed I have been most unhappy all my life. Three months ago a young captain began to stand near me every day in church. I could see that I pleased him; I am much to blame, but I was so glad that any one should love me; and when he passed me a letter, I took it home with me and read it with great pleasure. Since that time he has written many. He was so anxious to speak with me, poor fellow! and kept asking me to leave the door open some evening that we might have two words upon the stair. For he knew how much my uncle trusted me." She gave something like a sob at that, and it was a moment before she could go on. "My uncle is a hard man, but he is very shrewd," she said at last. "He has performed many feats in war, and was a great person at court, and much trusted by Queen Isabeau in old days. How he came to suspect me I cannot tell; but it is hard to keep anything from his knowledge; and this morning, as we came from mass,

he took my hand in his, forced it open, and read my little billet, walking by my side all the while. When he had finished, he gave it back to me with great politeness. It contained another request to have the door left open; and this has been the ruin of us all. My uncle kept me strictly in my room until evening, and then ordered me to dress myself as you see me—a hard mockery for a young girl, do you not think so? I suppose, when he could not prevail with me to tell him the young captain's name, he must have laid a trap for him: into which, alas! you have fallen in the anger of God. I looked for much confusion; for how could I tell whether he was willing to take me for his wife on these sharp terms? He might have been trifling with me from the first; or I might have made myself too cheap in his eyes. But truly I had not looked for such a shameful punishment as this! I could not think that God would let a girl be so disgraced before a young man. And now I have told you all; and I can scarcely hope that you will not despise me."

Denis made her a respectful inclination.

"Madam," he said, "you have honored me by your confidence. It remains for me to prove that I am not unworthy of the honor. Is Messire de Malétroit at hand?"

"I believe he is writing in the salle without," she answered.

"May I lead you thither, madam?" asked Denis, offering his hand with his most courtly bearing.

She accepted it; and the pair passed out of the chapel, Blanche in a very drooping and shamefaced condition, but Denis strutting and ruffling in the consciousness of

a mission, and the boyish certainty of accomplishing it with honor.

The Sire de Malétroit rose to meet them with an ironical obeisance.

"Sir," said Denis with the grandest possible air, "I believe I am to have some say in the matter of this marriage; and let me tell you at once, I will be no party to forcing the inclination of this young lady. Had it been freely offered to me, I should have been proud to accept her hand, for I perceive she is as good as she is beautiful; but as things are, I have now the honor, messire, of refusing."

Blanche looked at him with gratitude in her eyes; but the old gentleman only smiled and smiled, until his smile grew positively sickening to Denis.

"I am afraid," he said, "Monsieur de Beaulieu, that you do not perfectly understand the choice I have to offer you. Follow me, I beseech you, to this window." And he led the way to one of the large windows which stood open on the night. "You observe," he went on, "there is an iron ring in the upper masonry, and reeved through that, a very efficacious rope. Now, mark my words; if you should find your disinclination to my niece's person insurmountable, I shall have you hanged out of this window before sunrise. I shall only proceed to such an extremity with the greatest regret, you may believe me. For it is not at all your death that I desire, but my niece's establishment in life. At the same time, it must come to that if you prove obstinate. Your family, Monsieur de Beaulieu, is very well in its way; but if you sprang from Charlemagne, you should not refuse the hand of a Malétroit with impunity.

Neither my niece nor you, nor my own private feelings, move me at all in this matter."

There was a pause.

"I believe there are other ways of settling such imbroglios among gentlemen," said Denis. "You wear a sword, and I hear you have used it with distinction."

The Sire de Malétroit made a signal to the chaplain, who crossed the room with long silent strides and raised the arras over the third of the three doors. It was only a moment before he let it fall again; but Denis had time to see a dusky passage full of armed men.

"When I was a little younger, I should have been delighted to honor you, Monsieur de Beaulieu," said Sire Alain; "but I am now too old. Faithful retainers are the sinews of age, and I must employ the strength I have. This is one of the hardest things to swallow as a man grows up in years; but with a little patience, even this becomes habitual. You and the lady seem to prefer the salle for what remains of your two hours; and as I have no desire to cross your preference, I shall resign it to your use with all the pleasure in the world. No haste!" he added, holding up his hand, as he saw a dangerous look come into Denis de Beaulieu's face. "If your mind revolts against hanging, it will be time enough two hours hence to throw yourself out of the window or upon the pikes of my retainers. Two hours of life are always two hours. A great many things may turn up in even as little a while as that. And, besides, if I understand her appearance, my niece has still something to say to you. You will not disfigure your last hours by a want of politeness to a lady?"

Denis looked at Blanche, and she made him an imploring gesture.

It is likely that the old gentleman was hugely pleased at this symptom of an understanding; for he smiled on both, and added sweetly: "If you will give me your word of honor, Monsieur de Beaulieu, to wait my return at the end of two hours before attempting anything desperate, I shall withdraw my retainers, and let you speak in greater privacy with mademoiselle."

Denis again glanced at the girl, who seemed to beseech him to agree.

"I give you my word of honor," he said.

Messire de Malétroit bowed, and proceeded to limp about the apartment, clearing his throat the while with that odd musical chirp which had already grown so irritating in the ears of Denis de Beaulieu. He first possessed himself of some papers which lay upon the table; then he went to the mouth of the passage and appeared to give an order to the men behind the arras; and lastly he hobbled out through the door by which Denis had come in, turning upon the threshold to address a last smiling bow to the young couple, and followed by the chaplain with a hand-lamp.

No sooner were they alone than Blanche advanced towards Denis with her hands extended. Her face was flushed and excited, and her eyes shone with tears.

"You shall not die!" she cried. "You shall marry me after all."

"You seem to think, madam," replied Denis, "that I stand much in fear of death."

"Oh, no, no," she said, "I see you are no poltroon.

It is for my own sake—I could not bear to have you slain for such a scruple."

"I am afraid," returned Denis, "that you underrate the difficulty, madam. What you may be too generous to refuse, I may be too proud to accept. In a moment of noble feeling towards me, you forget what you perhaps owe to others."

He had the decency to keep his eyes upon the floor as he said this, and after he had finished, so as not to spy upon her confusion. She stood silent for a moment, then walked suddenly away, and falling on her uncle's chair, fairly burst out sobbing. Denis was in the acme of embarrassment. He looked round, as if to seek for inspiration, and seeing a stool, plumped down upon it for something to do. There he sat, playing with the guard of his rapier, and wishing himself dead a thousand times over, and buried in the nastiest kitchen-heap in France. His eyes wandered round the apartment, but found nothing to arrest them. There were such wide spaces between the furniture, the light fell so badly and cheerlessly over all, the dark outside air looked in so coldly through the windows, that he thought he had never seen a church so vast, nor a tomb so melancholy. The regular sobs of Blanche de Malétroit measured out the time like the ticking of a clock. He read the device upon the shield over and over again, until his eyes became obscured; he stared into shadowy corners until he imagined they were swarming with horrible animals; and every now and again he awoke with a start, to remember that his last two hours were running, and death was on the march.

Oftener and oftener, as the time went on, did his glance settle on the girl herself. Her face was bowed forward and covered with her hands, and she was shaken at intervals by the convulsive hiccup of grief. Even thus she was not an unpleasant object to dwell upon, with a warm brown skin, and the most beautiful hair, Denis thought, in the whole world of womankind. Her hands were like her uncle's; but they were more in place at the end of her young arms, and looked infinitely soft and caressing. He remembered how her blue eyes had shone upon him, full of anger, pity, and innocence. And the more he dwelt on her perfections, the uglier death looked, and the more deeply was he smitten with penitence at her continued tears. Now he felt that no man could have the courage to leave a world which contained so beautiful a creature; and now he would have given forty minutes of his last hour to have unsaid his cruel speech.

Suddenly a hoarse and ragged peal of cockcrow rose to their ears from the dark valley below the windows. And this shattering noise in the silence of all around was like a light in a dark place, and shook them both out of their reflections.

"Alas, can I do nothing to help you?" she said, looking up.

"Madam," replied Denis, with a fine irrelevancy, "if I have said anything to wound you, believe me, it was for your own sake and not for mine."

She thanked him with a tearful look.

"I feel your position cruelly," he went on. "The world has been bitter hard on you. Your uncle is a dis-

grace to mankind. Believe me, madam, there is no young gentleman in all France but would be glad of my opportunity to die in doing you a momentary service."

"I know already that you can be very brave and generous," she answered. "What I *want* to know is whether I can serve you—now or afterwards," she added, with a quaver.

"Most certainly," he answered with a smile. "Let me sit beside you as if I were a friend, instead of a foolish intruder; try to forget how awkwardly we are placed to one another; make my last moments go pleasantly; and you will do me the chief service possible."

"You are very gallant," she added, with a yet deeper sadness . . . "very gallant . . . and it somehow pains me. But draw nearer, if you please; and if you find anything to say to me, you will at least make certain of a very friendly listener. Ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu," she broke forth—"ah! Monsieur de Beaulieu, how can I look you in the face?" And she fell to weeping again with a renewed effusion.

"Madam," said Denis, taking her hand in both of his, "reflect on the little time I have before me, and the great bitterness into which I am cast by the sight of your distress. Spare me, in my last moments, the spectacle of what I cannot cure even with the sacrifice of my life."

"I am very selfish," answered Blanche. "I will be braver, Monsieur de Beaulieu, for your sake. But think if I can do you no kindness in the future—if you have no friends to whom I could carry your adieux. Charge me as heavily as you can; every burden will lighten,

by so little, the invaluable gratitude I owe you. Put it in my power to do something more for you than weep."

"My mother is married again, and has a young family to care for. My brother Guichard will inherit my fiefs; and if I am not in error, that will content him amply for my death. Life is a little vapor that passeth away, as we are told by those in holy orders. When a man is in a fair way and sees all life open in front of him, he seems to himself to make a very important figure in the world. His horse whinnies to him; the trumpets blow and the girls look out of window as he rides into town before his company; he receives many assurances of trust and regard—sometimes by express in a letter—sometimes face to face, with persons of great consequence falling on his neck. It is not wonderful if his head is turned for a time. But once he is dead, were he as brave as Hercules or as wise as Solomon, he is soon forgotten. It is not ten years since my father fell, with many other knights around him, in a very fierce encounter, and I do not think that any one of them, nor so much as the name of the fight, is now remembered. No, no, madam, the nearer you come to it, you see that death is a dark and dusty corner, where a man gets into his tomb and has the door shut after him till the judgment day. I have few friends just now, and once I am dead I shall have none."

"Ah, Monsieur de Beaulieu!" she exclaimed, "you forget Blanche de Malétroit."

"You have a sweet nature, madam, and you are pleased to estimate a little service far beyond its worth."

"It is not that," she answered. "You mistake me if

you think I am so easily touched by my own concerns. I say so, because you are the noblest man I have ever met; because I recognize in you a spirit that would have made even a common person famous in the land."

"And yet here I die in a mouse-trap—with no more noise about it than my own squeaking," answered he.

A look of pain crossed her face, and she was silent for a little while. Then a light came into her eyes, and with a smile she spoke again.

"I cannot have my champion think meanly of himself. Any one who gives his life for another will be met in Paradise by all the heralds and angels of the Lord God. And you have no such cause to hang your head. For . . . Pray, do you think me beautiful?" she asked, with a deep flush.

"Indeed, madam, I do," he said.

"I am glad of that," she answered heartily. "Do you think there are many men in France who have been asked in marriage by a beautiful maiden—with her own lips—and who have refused her to her face? I know you men would half despise such a triumph; but believe me, we women know more of what is precious in love. There is nothing that should set a person higher in his own esteem; and we women would prize nothing more dearly."

"You are very good," he said; "but you cannot make me forget that I was asked in pity and not for love."

"I am not so sure of that," she replied, holding down her head. "Hear me to an end, Monsieur de Beaulieu. I know how you must despise me; I feel you are right to do so; I am too poor a creature to occupy one

thought of your mind, although, alas! you must die for me this morning. But when I asked you to marry me, indeed, and indeed, it was because I respected and admired you, and loved you with my whole soul, from the very moment that you took my part against my uncle. If you had seen yourself, and how noble you looked, you would pity rather than despise me. And now," she went on, hurriedly checking him with her hand, "although I have laid aside all reserve and told you so much, remember that I know your sentiments towards me already. I would not, believe me, being nobly born, weary you with importunities into consent. I too have a pride of my own: and I declare before the holy Mother of God, if you should now go back from your word already given, I would no more marry you than I would marry my uncle's groom."

Denis smiled a little bitterly.

"It is a small love," he said, "that shies at a little pride."

She made no answer, although she probably had her own thoughts.

"Come hither to the window," he said, with a sigh. "Here is the dawn."

And indeed the dawn was already beginning. The hollow of the sky was full of essential daylight, colorless and clean; and the valley underneath was flooded with a gray reflection. A few thin vapors clung in the coves of the forest or lay along the winding course of the river. The scene disengaged a surprising effect of stillness, which was hardly interrupted when the cocks began once more to crow among the steadings. Perhaps the same fellow who had made so horrid a

clangor in the darkness not half an hour before, now sent up the merriest cheer to greet the coming day. A little wind went bustling and eddying among the tree-tops underneath the windows. And still the daylight kept flooding insensibly out of the east, which was soon to grow incandescent and cast up that red-hot cannon-ball, the rising sun.

Denis looked out over all this with a bit of a shiver. He had taken her hand, and retained it in his almost unconsciously.

"Has the day begun already?" she said; and then, illogically enough: "the night has been so long! Alas! what shall we say to my uncle when he returns?"

"What you will," said Denis, and he pressed her fingers in his.

She was silent.

"Blanche," he said, with a swift, uncertain, passionate utterance, "you have seen whether I fear death. You must know well enough that I would as gladly leap out of that window into the empty air as lay a finger on you without your free and full consent. But if you care for me at all do not let me lose my life in a misapprehension; for I love you better than the whole world! and though I will die for you blithely, it would be like all the joys of Paradise to live on and spend my life in your service."

As he stopped speaking, a bell began to ring loudly in the interior of the house; and a clatter of armor in the corridor showed that the retainers were returning to their post, and the two hours were at an end.

"After all that you have heard?" she whispered, leaning towards him with her lips and eyes.

"I have heard nothing," he replied.

"The captain's name was Florimond de Champdivers," she said in his ear.

"I did not hear it," he answered, taking her supple body in his arms and covering her wet face with kisses.

A melodious chirping was audible behind, followed by a beautiful chuckle, and the voice of Messire de Malétroit wished his new nephew a good morning.

SINGING EAGLES

by Marguerite Jacobs

MARGUERITE JACOBS

WHEN Marguerite Jacobs was a girl in Cincinnati, she read *Little Women* and determined to become a writer. From that time on, she did write—stories, poems, diaries, but chiefly plays for the children of the neighborhood. She lived in a family of brothers and sisters who were tennis and golf enthusiasts and she herself enjoyed playing. But her chief love was for her own writing and her books. The most exciting days of her life were when her first story was accepted by a magazine, when the check in payment of it arrived and when at last the story itself was published.

During the World War, and by that time a University of Cincinnati graduate, she entered publicity work and was eventually assigned to McCook Field at Dayton, Ohio, the research and testing center of the Army. "I shall never forget the thrill of seeing an airplane land for the first time," she writes. "My heart was in my throat and I can't remember whether it was a good or a bad landing, for the amazing beauty of it staggered me. I still think it one of the loveliest sights in all the world."

At McCook Field, home of many great airplane inventions, Marguerite Jacobs became acquainted with noted flyers and their planes and wrote about them. Today, stationed at the larger Wright Field in Dayton, she is continuing this interesting work. She has flown over Europe as well as this country, her most memorable trip being that from Dayton to Detroit with Anthony Fokker, the celebrated Dutch designer, in the plane in which Commander Byrd afterward flew across the North Pole.

Singing Eagles, one of her many stories of aviation, was chosen by the O. Henry Memorial Committee as one of the most distinguished stories of the year in which it was published. And her book, *Knights of the Wing,* has been commended by authorities in aviation in both this and other countries.

SINGING EAGLES

By Marguerite Jacobs

AN UNEXPECTED key turned in the lock; a light baritone echoed through the house:

"A flyer's wife a flyer's joy should be,
Yo ho! Yo ho!
Yo ho!"

"Bruce!" Martha dropped brush and hairpins and ran to meet him.

They met at the top of the stairs. "Took your breath, didn't I?" he boasted.

"What's happened?" Her eyes shone. "Is the course over? How did you get here?" That very morning she had received a letter lamenting the amount of midnight oil an aviator must burn to keep abreast in the advanced aërodynamic classes of Boston Tech.

"Flew," he answered her last question. "I'm awfully mussy. Just landed. Didn't wait to wash—peeled off my flying duds and hurried here."

"I'm all trembly," she confessed, "you surprised me so." Arms about each other, they entered the bedroom, gay with mahogany and cretonnes. For the hundredth time, Martha was glad that when she married Lieutenant Bruce Fairing, Air Service, U. S. Army, she had spent the money left by her mother in making their home a place of charm; once more she was repaid by her husband's pleasure in the richness of color and comfort.

"Where's Petie-Girl?" He looked about for his red-haired baby daughter.

"The Dodo Bird has her out walking," Martha told him.

Then he was in a deep chair with her in his lap. "But you didn't tell me," she reminded him.

"Well, I was out at the Field yesterday when a chap named Quincey—'Quince' we used to call him in France—landed in a pursuit ship. I tell you, Martha, after weeks with nothing but little training Jennies, that plane went straight to my head. When I found that Quince was staying on in Boston until next Tuesday, it dawned upon me here was my chance to stretch my legs in an honest-to-goodness flight. I could come home and get the plane back in time easily. So I pulled wires for the week-end, left Boston at nine this morning, made one stop for gas—and here I am. Not bad time, eh?"

"Wonderful! But must you go back on Monday? Can't you stay?"

"Sunday. Can't you be grateful for small favors, young lady?"

"Not when you've been away for four months."

"Darling, you can't tell me how it is. In two more months, though, I'll be on your hands for good. I can scarcely wait to get back. Look at this." He drew from his pocket a red flexible leather notebook, showing her pages closely covered with mathematical equations, diagrams, and lecture notes. "I sure have boned. But"—eagerly—"there's more of the science of aviation to be learned in flying than in all the curves ever plotted."

"I must dress." She kissed him and sprang up. The

charm had been broken. She had been his goal, but his greatest need, his craving, would be always, not for her, but for "stretching his legs in the air."

Nor was she altogether without understanding of that need. Three years ago, at twenty-two, when she had come to Ohio, to take a position at McGraw Field, she had collided with Bruce Fairing and fallen in love. The story of that whirlwind courtship and marriage had been a sensation of the Army Post. In those first days she had thought herself possessed, too, of his strong obsession for flying. He had taken her up at every opportunity, using commercial airplanes when possible, or straining government regulations that they might fly together. In a dual-control training ship, he had taught her to take the stick, even letting her essay landings now and then. It had been thrilling happiness, absolutely devoid of fear. Then, before Petie-Girl's arrival, the doctor had ordered her out of the air and something had happened. She had not lost her nerve for herself. But fears for Bruce had begun to harass her. When she knew he was to fly, an unreasoning nervousness seized her. Hands icy and trembling she walked the floor, unable to control the horror of her thoughts. For a time she had fought in silence. Then waking, screaming in the night, from a vision in which she saw him crushed under a plane, she told him of her torture. He laughed and comforted her. That was all. But the premonitions had not been quite groundless, for, sent to ferry a new plane to a Northern flying field shortly after, he had been forced by engine breakage to land in a small clearing surrounded by woodland. The plane had struck a stump concealed by leaves, nosed over,

and two days later rescue parties had found him dragging his way, badly battered, through the woods with a broken leg.

Nor was that the end. Petie-Girl had scarcely been acknowledged a bona-fide inhabitant when, testing out the ability of a certain plane to cross the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico from Panama to Florida, he had been caught in a typhoon, blown from his course, and—while submarine chasers combed the sea for him —had arrived at his goal, paint gone from his plane, holes in the wings, and a mere stub of a propeller whirling in the hub—grimy, worn, but dauntless. There had been months of bitter struggle between them after that. She had begged him to resign from the army. A brother had made possible greater opportunities for financial success than the army ever would hold. That he should refuse to secure his safety and usefulness for the happiness of their future and that of their child seemed to Martha beyond all reason. But he was obdurate, and in the end she had had to yield or reduce their days to petty haggling. Then, as now, the fact had been driven into her consciousness that, while he was the pivot about which her life revolved, in his life flying was fundamental . . .

She glanced past her own face in the mirror, past the masses of red-gold hair, past the high color of flushed cheeks to the dark, slim laziness of the man contentedly watching her. His uniform was untidy from the long flight, he had opened his shirt at the throat, and his fingers had thoroughly ruffled the dark hair before clasping each other behind his head; but his eyes, brown like the smoked amber of a pipe stem, kindled at her re-

flected smile, forcing up Martha's barometer of happiness.

"I must call up Tenny," he drawled.

"You needn't. He's coming to dinner tonight," Martha twinkled. "And Peg is coming, too. We're going to the officers' hop at the Field. Like to come along?"

"Rather!" He unbuttoned his puttees. "How are Tenny and Peg doing?"

"Oh, Tenny's more in love than ever. And I believe she's weakening. See what you think tonight."

"She doesn't know Ten, let alone love him," he fumed. "Wanting him to give up flying. Why, it's his life work. Old Tenny's an artist at it."

"No, she's right not to marry him if she couldn't bear it," defended Martha. "Remember, her cousin was killed—she knows what it is. I admire her strength of will, for she does love him, dear. If I had it—"

"You don't worry, though, as you used to—do you, Martha?" he asked her then.

Martha lied bravely; the mirror reflected her shining eyes.

Candles flickered warmly on the four faces about Martha's table and on a bowl of flaming hothouse poppies Tenny had brought, which in their brilliance flaunted the flamboyance and brevity of all glory. Tenny's was a sensitive face. Cheek bones too high, chin too long, skin weathered by all the winds of heaven, he was saved from homeliness by a certain grace of bearing, a charm of smile. He and Bruce, who had met in a German prison camp and escaped together, had been stationed after the war at the same flying field as test

pilots. Tenny now smiled upon Peg, who seemed to recede to distances he could not reach. Bruce's presence always had this effect upon her. He could not forgive her. For three years she had held Tenny's rare devotion in the hollow of her hand, refusing to let it drift away or to close her hand upon it. Bruce wondered if men were becoming emasculated that nowadays it could be made a condition to love that they give up their work because it was dangerous.

The party had been in high feather at the surprise of having Bruce with them. Tenny had given Bruce the news of the Field tests on his new parachute that were being run, and Martha interrupted to laugh over a newspaper headline that had conferred upon Tenny the hoary title of "Father of Safety Devices." Tenny mentioned a new speed monoplane that had just been delivered; Bruce's eyes grew newly alert and he suggested that he and Tenny have a bit of combat practice the next afternoon.

Feeling Peg's withdrawal of sympathy, Bruce was unable to resist a gay: "Better come with us, Peggy!" And beautifully poised, her voice soft but her blue eyes steely, Peg tossed off her ultimatum. "When that awful expression, 'They all come to it,' ceases to be a byword for flyers, perhaps I'll fly. Certainly not before."

"A hangover from a dead language," Bruce scoffed. "We don't all come to it. Behold Ten and yours truly carrying on for years."

"It used to be true, perhaps," Tenny modified, "but you are safer in the air today than motoring on a crowded road. Statistics bear that out, I dare say. The casualties from auto smash-ups last year were tremendous."

"Statistics?" Peg contended. "But no woman believes in them. Does she, Martha?"

"Yes, I believe," Martha admitted. "But flyers' wives do better, Peg. They just don't think."

Exclamations over Martha's begging of the question were cut short by the doorbell, and to the noise of almost rowdy greetings, Bruce led in Lieutenant Dan Devereux, formerly of McGraw Field, just flown in from California. Half-bashful cub, half clown, Dan held his own niche in their hearts.

"What's this I hear of your falling in love, Dan?" asked Martha, when he was seated. All shouted at the brick red that followed Martha's random shot, and Dan had to produce the story, ending with: "I don't know how it happened; but all of a sudden I had on her finger the piece of glass that springs the big surprise on a fellow's life-insurance policy."

"That's the way to fall in love," approved Bruce.

"Cornelia's people weren't very happy about me," said Dan. "Didn't like the idea of my flying—offered to back me if I'd go into some nice safe business. But she was a trump. Stood right by me. We fellows know it takes no special grit to be a flyer. But to be a flyer's wife, taking us for the poor duds we are in the first place, sticking the flying, standing by through our bonehead accidents—that takes grit."

"But it is you who come crashing down," said Peg, a little breathlessly. Only Martha sensed that Peg's back was almost to the wall.

"But that's what people don't seem to understand. There's nothing to a crock-up." A grave sweetness touched the rollicking voice. "It's a clean death. Better than Gregg's going by inches with T. B. or Grove's six

days' agony with pneumonia. It's a little sooner for some of us, but what does that matter? It is you those years are long for—if you cared. Here's to the flyer's wife!" He lifted his glass to Martha. "The spunk of the spunkiest!"

"To the flyer's wife who keeps her husband in the air!" added Bruce.

"To the flyer's wife!" repeated Tenny, his eyes drawn from Martha to Peg.

A loud crow from above stairs turned each face upward.

"Cheers from the gallery," interpreted Bruce. "Dan, you must see my offspring."

"Let me get her." And Tenny was on the stairs. He returned with Petie-Girl, her surprised little head sticking out of a pink blanket. Her eyes, the burnt amber of her father's, were agape at the candles. Her hair, her mother's gift, flamed goldenly atop. From the security of Tenny's arms, she surveyed the group with shy smiles.

"Let me have her, Tenny!" Peg with her sweetest smile stretched her arms to the baby. A moment of hesitation, then Petie-Girl came into them, dragging Tenny with her by a finger. The talk returned to Dan, and Petie-Girl drooped her heavy head on Peg's breast and slept.

Finally, with a little cry for the flown hours, Martha declared they'd have to hurry to make the dance at all. Peg declared she'd not have Petie-Girl waked. She'd carry her to bed herself. Martha asked Tenny to go with her to switch on the lights. Bruce found Martha standing in the hall like a godmother in a fairy tale, her

face alight. "Martha," he touched her hand, "you look adorable. Dan's love story carried me back. It's all new and magic, Martha—"

"Didn't you see?" she breathed. "Dan started it; Petie-Girl finished it. I told you Peg was weakening."

Steps on the stairs, in the room, and on Tenny's face an ineffable expression. "Martha—Bruce, old man, congratulate me." His quiet voice trembled. Within the circle of his arm they saw not the Peg, cool and haughty, they had seen all evening, but a flaming Peg, shining through her tears.

When they finally stepped out-of-doors, they lifted their faces instinctively to the great finger of the searchlight. Swinging sharply from the flying field, it pierced the jeweled darkness with a shaft of white.

"Night-flying tonight," observed Peg happily, and it was as if she announced herself a convert to a new creed.

Late the next afternoon Martha was surprised again by the sound of a key in the lock, and the muffled call of her name. Then Bruce was in the doorway, gray-white, stricken, trembling. "Tenny!" he cried hoarsely. "Tenny—" and would have collapsed but for her arms.

"Bruce," she cried, "Bruce—listen to me! You were flying. Tenny crashed—did he? Bruce, he isn't—?"

She was aware of the doorbell persistently ringing. The sound penetrated even Bruce's consciousness, recalled him to himself. Strength returned to his limbs; he straightened, then sank to the edge of the bed, rocking, fighting for control. Still the bell harassed, commanded the house.

"It's Harley," he got out. "Go down and let him in. I'll—I'll be there in a minute."

In nervous haste she opened the door to the grizzled, anxious-faced Post surgeon. "Oh, Major Harley"—he took her hand—"Bruce has told me nothing."

"The two planes were acrobating," he told her, "beautiful flying, scores watching. Wings of Tenny's plane collapsed. Looked like paper fluttering out. Plane went into dive. Engine plunged six feet into ground, Tenny underneath. Bruce saw it all, landed immediately. Unfortunately, Tenny didn't wear his parachute."

"Why, he never flew without it," cried Martha. "He helped design it."

"I know. It seems he had sent it to be repacked. Ordered it back in time for this flight with Bruce. Didn't come. There'd been an unusual number of visitors, and reserves were all out. Bruce had started up, not knowing about the row. Tenny, saying he'd chance it once, hopped in his ship and followed Bruce. Life's queer. Many men will owe their lives to Tenny's chute, but when he needed it, it wasn't there."

"Only last night—" began Martha, and ended with a sob. "Oh, Peg—Peg!"

"They all come to it," Peg had said. That was the by-word about flyers.

She felt Bruce's arm about her shoulders. "Don't cry, Martha. Hurry to Peg, won't you? I'll get in touch with you somehow, later."

Again tears came—for Tenny, for herself, for Bruce. Could she go on forever secretly nagged by dread, nervous at the sudden ringing of the telephone, faint at an unexpected telegram? Perhaps if she begged him,

now that flying had dealt him this bitter blow, he would listen. As she drove through town, newsboys were screaming Tenny's death.

Peg knew. Still and white, she was putting things into a suitcase open on the bed. "I'm going with Bruce to Tenny's mother," she said, and Martha helped her pack. Suddenly Peg's chilled hand clutched her. "Martha," she said desperately, "I could kill myself for the coward I've been. Tenny and I have loved each other for two years. But I've listened to my family, who coddled me, I've listened to my scared yellow streak and to my perversity that begrudged his loyalty to flying. I could kill myself."

"Then you think you were wrong—that flying was worth his life?" Martha's voice was hard.

"I only know that if I could have these two years back I wouldn't care if both our bodies were broken into little bits. Bodies don't seem to matter, somehow. But I didn't know that until just now. And how can I remember last night without remembering all the months I've cheated us of? Oh, darling—"

Grief had made Peg illogical, Martha decided the next night when alone. She had just returned from the station where Peg and Bruce with a gray, flag-draped box bearing the Air Service insignia had started for Vermont. Peg had forgotten that, had Tenny listened to her, he'd be alive at this moment.

That very evening Martha wrote to the brother who had long wanted Bruce in his business:

He goes straight from Vermont to Boston to finish his course. If you will go to him, Jimmy dear, he may listen. For he loved Tenny very dearly and is sick over his loss. I feel it may be the

psychological moment to suggest such a change. Before he left, I begged him to put in his resignation. He was half ready to, I think. If you succeed, I shall be grateful to you all my life.

Two weeks later she had an answer. Jimmy had gone to Boston, had made Bruce a good business proposition —and been refused. Bruce had seemed anything but discouraged about the flying game, had talked of various developments, and expressed his eagerness to get back to McGraw Field and real flying.

Martha was bitterly disappointed. She had failed so utterly in her conflict with Bruce. Yet if she did not care enough to oppose him for his own safety, her love was a spineless thing. And if he did not care enough to make her happiness a consideration, he did not love her at all.

Just a week before the completion of the course, Martha wrote:

DEAR BRUCE:

What I say may hurt you. In a week you will be coming home. It was a time to which I had looked forward. Now I can see no happiness ahead for us. I'm going to Jane's for a bit. I want to think things out. The house will be in readiness for you. I suppose you will take your meals at the Officers' Club. The Dodo Bird will keep things clean. Your new uniform has come from the tailor's, and your tuxedo is hanging in the hall closet. I can't understand you, Bruce. I only know that I am wretched and you show no pity, that you are willing to make no smallest sacrifice to save me from intolerable distress. But since you can't see any but your own point of view, there's nothing more to be said.

MARTHA.

Martha had been with Jane a month when Bruce appeared. She was rocking Petie-Girl to sleep when,

looking up, she saw him leaning in the doorway, very white, as if he were ill or under the stress of strong emotion. She knew he had come to take her home and, all at once, she was weary of the dissension between them.

"Martha . . ." Passionate, hurt pleading vibrated through his tones. He came into the room and stood looking down upon her in the lamplight. Suddenly, he dropped to his knees, burying his face in her shoulder, and she knew he was coming to her for comfort as surely as did this other child in her arms. Perhaps all flyers were children, the dreams and daring of youth somehow unshattered by hard realities.

Peace for six months. No accidents at the Field to set sensitive nerves quivering. Bruce singing in his bath, calling her name as his key came from the lock, wooing her by look and deed. A time of peace.

One brilliant morning, Martha turned from the study of a shop window to lift her eyes to the blue, where the long whine of a motor told her a plane was being "stunted." There, silvered in the sunshine, zooming, looping, diving—a singing eagle. Not many flyers had that sureness of technique, and she remembered Bruce had remarked at breakfast he was going to flight-test a new type of aileron. A surge of pride thrilled her.

"The eagle suffers little birds to sing," quoted Martha, her spirit soaring to the plane, more than a mile above. But this was a singing eagle, and she laughed inwardly at the picture Bruce had given her of singing at the top of his voice, on cross-country flights and, against the noise of engine and propeller blast, never hearing a sound. He would not be singing up there now. Such

tests took all a flyer's powers of concentration. Pray God the new ailerons were all they had thought.

Suddenly, the blood chilled at her heart, for a dive was lasting too long and with a speed which had become terrifying; the plane was shooting, nose down, for the earth. For an agonized instant, she sensed the pilot's—no, Bruce's—impotent struggle with the controls. For age-long seconds, the helplessness of it stabbed and tortured her. Then a small black thing, no bigger than an ink bottle, leaped away from the plane and spun downward. About to cover the sickening descent from her eyes, she saw flutter out a long white streamer, which in another instant had opened into a parachute that slowed the downward rush of the small object. The heavy plane had plunged on behind a curtain of trees and houses.

Around her, people had stopped, cries witnessed calamity. Above, where the parachute was gliding earthward, the dangling ink bottle was assuming the lines of a man. Scarcely conscious of action, Martha pushed her way to the curb and with shaking hands headed her car toward the edge of town to which the parachute was drifting.

When, after twelve minutes, she had reached the suburban district, she needed no instructions. Doors stood open, houses deserted. On foot, by motor and bicycle, crowds hurried in one direction. "Parachute landed in Brown's grape arbor!" a boy shouted. Farther down the street she saw the Field ambulance. Held up by the number of cars, she abandoned hers and ran with the crowd.

It had been Bruce! A stretcher stood in the middle

of a lawn and upon it they had lifted him. Hands clasped under his head, eyes brilliant, he lay, while about him, half hysterical with joy, the memory of Tenny still upon them, hovered officers and men from the Field—familiar and unfamiliar faces, strangers, reporters, all laughing, talking. There, across the lawn was the smashed grape arbor, the mammoth folds of parachute silk caught upon it lifting in the breeze.

Martha, at the edge of the crowd, was paralyzed in will and emotion. He was safe! She heard Major Harley's commanding tones ordering a way for the stretcher-bearers. "Stand back there—stand back!" Then, as the stretcher was lifted to the ambulance, a sharp "Be careful of that leg!" while officers sprang forward to make the lifting easier. Still she stood, weak and helpless, watching the ambulance swallow him up and hurry, clanging, down the street. As she turned, she heard her name. Before her stood a young lieutenant whom Bruce had brought to dinner one night, eyeing her with puzzled pity. He found her car, put her into it, and drove to the Post hospital.

Major Harley was with Bruce, the attendant told them. It seemed a long time before he appeared from an inner room. "We've been trying to get you, Martha," he said curtly. "Where have you been?"

"Bruce—" gasped Martha.

"Has been asking for you. But you can't go in like that. Pull yourself together"—impatiently. "This is no funeral, you know. Bruce saved himself. Came down in a parachute. It was beautiful."

"Yes, I saw the whole thing," said Martha.

"Now, see here, Martha, Bruce is all right. But he's

got a badly twisted leg from that grape arbor, and his nerves may be somewhat shot when the reaction sets in. He hasn't been up to par lately, and I won't have an hysterical woman upsetting him."

"Women aren't made of iron," flamed Martha.

"They've got to be," snapped the Major, "if they're going to mate with flyers."

An orderly opened the door. "The lieutenant is asking for Mrs. Fairing."

Within, through the half dark, Martha's eyes flew to the cot in the corner. "Hello, there!" She heard her voice achieve lightness. "How do you feel?"

There was an outflung hand. "Drowsy," came Bruce's answer, calmly, and though she could not see his eyes, she knew the unconquerable light of them. "Harley has doped me to make me sleep. But I wanted to see you first."

She kissed him gently, suppressing the desperate things thundering from her heart. "I'm here now, old dear. So you can drop right off."

"Martha"—his clasp hurt her hand—"Tenny saved me."

"You mean because you wore his parachute?"

"No—he was with me. He got me over the side. I almost heard him speak. Queer—and it's so long between the time you know you can't control the plane and—she crashes."

"But you didn't crash, dear."

"No. I was thinking of old Ten—no parachute. It was pie for me."

Pie! At five thousand feet with but a piece of silk between him and extinction.

"Were you badly frightened, Martha?"

"I thought you'd be killed like Tenny," she wanted to say.

"Not frightened—no, dear." But no effort could keep her voice from choking off in a convulsive shudder.

He had jerked aside the drawn window shade beside the cot, setting her face in a flare of light. Beneath the searching of his gaze she tried to smile, but the horror that hour had unconsciously stamped upon her could not be shammed away. She saw astonished fear dawn in his own face. "Martha, what's happened to you?"

"Nothing."

"That's not true—you are ill"—tersely.

"It is true, now that you are safe."

"Nothing wrong with Petie?"

"Nothing—I give you my word. Lie down and rest."

He let the shade fall into place, restoring the grateful dimness, but his eyes focussed strangely straight ahead.

"That sickness in your eyes—your face—is that for me, Martha?"

"You know how anxious I get, Bruce."

"I didn't know that it was this—that it *broke* you so—I never saw it before."

"It's nothing, really. We'll both forget it." But her hand in his clasp, her whole body was trembling violently.

"Those other times—always like this?" he insisted.

"Please, Bruce—please"—pantingly.

"Martha"—slowly—"I see now what you meant in

your letters. Dan had it—that night. Only I'm not worth such caring, Martha."

She tried to speak, but her breath was choking her. He touched her shoulder, then suddenly braced her trembling within his arms. "A man doesn't go his way over a woman's body," he told himself. Then, "I can't ask you to go through any more for me, Martha."

"But you can—oh, Bruce, you can!" Defeated in her effort for control, she broke into wild sobbing.

"I give in. We'll write Jim—send my resignation to the army."

"No, Bruce—no!"

"Yes, Martha—yes." A heaviness in his voice, a laxity in his arms struck her. His eyes when she looked up were strange and sleep-heavy. "It's the dope," he murmured, his breathing growing deeper. "You'll stay?" he asked, but before she could assure him, his eyes had closed.

Martha sat, scarcely stirring, the heavy helpless hand within her own. He was safe—through with flying. He would not "come to it." She was glad of the agony of this day if it had accomplished that. But where was the anticipated feeling of relief, of freedom, of triumph? Was she still too bruised with near-tragedy to sense anything but the ache of it? Or was it that, in taking this step, they were turning their backs upon the essence of their romance, of their high dreams, of their youth? Would these things shrink away in a more settled assurance of safety?

The torn ligaments and the nervous reaction had been pretty bad. Bruce had wakened from his narcotic-

induced sleep sick in body and mind. For a time all rest was broken by strange dreams in which he fell helplessly, while his parachute failed to open, or lay pinned in wreckage about to burst into flames. Often, he struggled and cried out, and Martha hurrying to him, bathed the cold perspiration from his face. Even after the racking leg pain was gone, the sick nerves failed to recover properly, and Harley had ordered an indefinite leave of absence, preferably to some mountain resort where airplanes would be non-existent and "aviation" an unused word. Jane, Martha's favorite sister-in-law, would take Petie-Girl.

The morning of the hegira, Martha followed Major Harley to the door. Since the accident, a few days after which Bruce's resignation had gone in, there had been a strange reticence between them. Martha had carried out orders, but opportunities for unnecessary talk had been evaded. In the last few days, however, the surgeon had caught a harassed look in the gray eyes and the well-set flamboyant head seemed oddly dispirited. Well, she was rather young for the large doses life had been feeding her.

"Pretty cross, isn't he?" he remarked as she held him, tacitly lingering in the doorway.

"Is it a sign of getting better?" she pleaded.

"Sometimes—if the patient seems in good spirits otherwise."

"I don't think Bruce does, especially." She didn't like saying it.

"Broody?"

"For hours, sometimes. I've never known him like that before."

"We men don't bear confinement very well," he comforted.

"It isn't just confinement. When he had his broken leg, there were smoke and poker and men in his room all day long."

"They still come, don't they?"

"But Bruce won't play cards. They don't talk flying. It's different."

"Well, this accident coming on top of Tenny's death, your leaving him—oh, I guessed that—the worry over giving up flying—you'll have to give him time."

"You say kind things, but in your heart you think I have been wrong." The trouble in her face deepened. "I want you to know, though, Major Harley, that I didn't take advantage of Bruce's decision that day at the hospital. It was only after I learned what a horror flying had become to him from those frightful dreams that I sent in his resignation."

"I suppose, Martha, it would seem extremely strange to you were I to tell you that those visions of Bruce's were the natural result in his condition of his decision to stop flying?" asked the doctor.

"How could they be?" She became paler.

"Because the nervous system is a most contradictory factor. Bruce has always faced such dangers, but the joys of flying have meant so much more to him that he easily relegated them to his subconscious thoughts. In his illness, forcing all thoughts of flying from his conscious mind, he unbarred the gates of the subconscious, spilling out the terrors. Quite simple from a doctor's viewpoint, you see?"

"I had hoped—"

"That he was cured of aviation? What do you *think,* Martha?" The keen eyes bored through her. Martha looked past them unseeingly into the brilliant sunshine which, already jaded with spring, was trying to coax forth summer. "All my thoughts come back to the big fact that I have saved his life," she said fervently. "Some day, I hope Bruce will see that and be glad of it, too."

The doctor held out his hand. "Good-by, Martha. I hope you and Bruce find the happiness that lies just over the hill."

That afternoon they were off to a mountain farm. Through sunny hours of warming days they sat outdoors, Bruce with his leg propped on a chair, while Martha read to him or left him to lounge or smoke. The air held the tinge of high places, the wide vista of valleys and hills, a healing peace and beauty. Only the mail reminded them of their severed association. Martha fingered it with anxiety each day, letters from flyers scattered over the world, congratulating him upon his escape, commenting upon his intended resignation. None blamed him. Flyers knew their game: how much they staked, how little its future held for them. They had no criticism for one who acted upon that knowledge. But the resignation had evidently become balled up in Washington.

They never discussed these letters, nor flying, in fact, after a day that Martha had surprised upon him a look of such eagerness. "Martha, I know how to take the bug out of that aileron that failed me." The next instant had found them staring at each other, Martha with fright in her eyes, Bruce a bit sheepish, a bit sullen, the

fine ardor gone. It was the one time since the accident that the old Bruce had appeared.

Now and then, at night, that look would come to haunt her, while a worrying inner voice questioned her right to play God in Bruce's life. The picture of the plane as she had seen it falling that morning, however, was usually enough to strengthen her resolves, shutting thought to further argument.

Gradually, Bruce discarded crutches for a cane. The hollows in cheek bones became less concave, the gray pallor changed to tan. Restlessness flicked him into activity. There was a stream near by, with rapids and fish in a deep pool below which Bruce explored with a rod.

Finding a rent in the old leather flying jacket he usually wore on such expeditions, Martha prepared to mend it and, feeling a foreign material between lining and coat, drew forth the red flexible leather notebook he had showed her the day he had flown in from Boston. She flicked the pages and was about to lay it aside when there leaped from the jumble of lecture notes and mathematics, in Bruce's sprawl, the words, "Tenny, old man, where are You?" She turned more pages, unintelligible with technicalities. Suddenly she caught her name. "Can't you see, Martha," he had written, harassed in the midst of work, "that if I give up flying for you, you leave me nothing—not even yourself?"

The coat slipped heedlessly to the floor. "If I give up flying, you leave me nothing—not even yourself." Surely that day in the hospital, when he had voluntarily decided, that meaning had not been in his mind. "You leave me nothing—not even yourself." Blindly she knew,

past all doubt, that Bruce would not change. She rose, spilling the sewing things about her, pacing the small room.

Pictures of that old Bruce crowded her mind, buoyant, waving to her, swinging into his plane; of Bruce and Tenny roaring with laughter. Peg's face flashed before her, "Bodies don't seem to count—" She knew now what Peg had meant—Peg, to whom the revelation had come too late.

She stooped to pick up and replace the leather notebook in the coat. Then, urged by the need of Bruce, she ran from the room, down the hill toward the ledges.

There was a spot where one could glimpse the rocks through the trees. He was there, his cane beside him, looking oddly small and lonely in the vast setting of peaks and chasm, while an eagle from the crags above banked and circled freely out in the sky. Again Martha hurried down the steep grade, until, reaching the jutting rock he had made his own, she settled down softly, not too near him.

"Hello," he greeted her, not looking up from the pipe he was filling. Martha drank him in eagerly, seeking the old Bruce she had almost found up there in the little bedroom.

"Bruce," she said, after a silence, "let's go home."

"Very well"—indifferently. "Only what's the sudden idea?"

"I'm dying to see Petie-Girl." The suppressed homesickness for her baby suddenly overwhelmed her.

"Poor little tyke, I guess she does wonder if she has parents. When do we go?"

"Tomorrow?"

"O. K. with me."

Silence again. The sun dropped behind a peak and the great valley began to be filled with shadows. She knew he was thinking of the time beyond tomorrow. "Queer about the resignation," he commented finally.

"Yes—queer!" she assented. Then she heard her voice, strangely pitched, saying, "It mustn't come, Bruce."

"Don't worry. It will," he laughed shortly.

"Can't we stop it?" tensely.

He jerked to a more erect posture. "What on earth are you driving at, Martha?"

"Oh," moaned Martha, bowing her face to her updrawn knees, "how can I say it?"

"You mean you have changed your mind"—he was staring at her now, frankly puzzled—"about my flying?"

"Yes—oh, yes."

"Then don't bother to say it"—coldly. "I can't switch my decisions about like a cat's tail. That's settled forever."

Martha lifted her head, high wings of color mounting in her white face. "Do you mean, Bruce, that you don't long for the feel of the stick in your palm and the rudder under your shoes, for the roar of the engine wide open, for the long lift and banking with the earth swaying beneath? Do you mean that, after all these weeks of struggle, your mind in its first idle moments does not swing back to the problems of flight, that the ache of giving it up is not the hardest thing you have ever endured? Have your dreams changed, Bruce? For ten years now you have been face to face with its dangers, its tragedies, yet does not your greatest sense

of exultation lie in the knowledge that you can fly?"

Martha looked away to the flaming afterglow that had rolled up from the fallen sun. "I have been wrong," she said, and bowed her head once more to her knees. "It is too big a thing I was fighting—civilization itself. But only today did I realize that I was fighting something infinitely bigger to me—your love for me, our love for each other."

"Why hark back over all this? It's settled, I tell you."

"Because we must do something about that resignation," said Martha more calmly. "That day at the hospital, you made a decision for my sake. We thought it final. It wasn't, but this one is. You are going back to flying, Bruce, and I swear to you that never again will I try to get you to give it up—never again. I'm afraid I'm glad—deep down—glad that I can't make anything but an aviator out of you."

He started to his feet, forgetting his cane. Martha ran to him, lifting her face, tear-stained but touched with triumph.

"I can't understand." He was white.

Martha's eyes were luminous, tender. Never would he learn of the discovery of the red leather notebook. "Don't try to understand. Just believe me, dear, and help me to be fearless as I used to be—to be a true flyer's wife."

"Martha!"—brokenly. "So you're with me again, old girl?"

Martha needed no words to answer.

"You will try to stop the resignation?" she persisted, after a moment.

"I'll go to Washington tomorrow"—gently. "It may

not have reached the Chief's office. It will be a funny spectacle—like a dog after its own tail. But—I can do anything now."

They laughed and were again in each other's arms, but a crackling of twigs, a swishing of leaves warned them apart. Their farmer emerged breathlessly from the woods. "Flyin' machine jes' landed beyond the hill there," he panted. "Turned upside down. Young fellow dragged out, hardly scratched. Jes' wanted to tell you your supper's set out in the kitchen. We're goin' over to see it."

Aviation had come to the backwoods mountain town.

"Did you hear the name of the pilot?" asked Bruce excitedly.

"What? Oh, no, sir." He hastened up the hill, then returned, and they saw in his hand an envelope, a thin, official-looking, blue-white envelope, bearing a War Department frank. "Most forgot to give you this. It come in the mail," he announced.

Gone also was the moment of elation, as, stunned, they looked upon it.

"It appears that a trip to Washington will be unnecessary," he said. "Martha, I'm *safely* out of the army."

She turned from him, shrinking.

Lifelessly he mutilated the envelope, tearing it away from the contents.

"It isn't the usual form," he remarked dully. "Why, it's a letter—a letter from the General. Martha!" His voice mounted in its high surprise. "Martha! Listen! '—am writing to learn if you won't reconsider your decision and remain one of us . . . your marked ability as a pilot, knowledge of the science of aëronautics, and

long experience render your services especially valuable at the present stage of progress . . . great amount of work to be done . . . special mission want to discuss with you as soon as health permits return to work.' Martha! From the old man! Martha—Martha—"

But Martha was there, close to his hammering heart, eagerly gleaning the words.

The mad surge of color had died from the sky, but for them the sky and the woods were still glowing as they took their way up the hill to the lighted farmhouse.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

by Oscar Wilde

OSCAR WILDE

WHEN, upon his graduation from preparatory school, Oscar Wilde won a prize and was called upon by his full name to receive it—Oscar Fingal O'Flahartie Wills Wilde—he was much annoyed. He was proud of his Irish descent, but to have five Irish names was to him a doubtful blessing. The school was at Enniskillen, one of the royal schools of Ireland, and the prize was in literature. He disliked mathematics. He was poor in music. But books and talking about books were a joy.

In the Stone Hall of the school was a stove where the boys liked to gather on winter afternoons. Here Oscar was invariably to be found, talking, talking, talking—recounting real and imaginary adventures, spinning intricate fancies. He was especially fond of telling what he would have done had he been this or that famous character. Later, in London, he was to become known as a brilliant conversationalist and to have it said that many lines in his plays came directly from his own conversation.

By the time he was seventeen and a student in Trinity College, Dublin, he was an excellent classical scholar. There he was awarded a medal for a paper on the Greek comic poets. No effort was too great for him to expend upon his own translations of ancient authors. And already he was sensitive to the delicate use of words.

At Dublin he won the classical scholarship which enabled him to go to Oxford. And at Oxford in 1878 he wrote a poem for the Annual Commemoration which was at once acclaimed. Graduating, he traveled to his beloved Greece, returning to enter a whirl of society in London, to write for his living and to take a keen interest in the theater.

There is much of sadness in Oscar Wilde's life, in his extravagance, his vanity and his failures in his human relationships. Yet we are grateful for his exquisite poems—among them *The Ballad of Reading Gaol,* for his plays—including *Lady Windermere's Fan* —and his lovely stories such as those in *The Happy Prince* where *The Nightingale and the Rose* is to be found.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE

By Oscar Wilde

"She said that she would dance with me if I brought her red roses," cried the young Student; "but in all my garden there is no red rose."

From her nest in the holm-oak tree the Nightingale heard him, and she looked out through the leaves, and wondered.

"No red rose in all my garden!" he cried, and his beautiful eyes filled with tears. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched."

"Here at last is a true lover," said the Nightingale. "Night after night have I sung of him, though I knew him not: night after night have I told his story to the stars, and now I see him. His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, and sorrow has set her seal upon his brow."

"The Prince gives a ball tomorrow night," murmured the young Student, "and my love will be of the company. If I bring her a red rose she will dance with me till dawn. If I bring her a red rose, I shall hold her in my arms, and she will lean her head upon my shoulder, and her hand will be clasped in mine. But there is no red rose in my garden, so I shall sit lonely, and she will pass me by. She will have no heed of me, and my heart will break."

"Here indeed is the true lover," said the Nightingale. "What I sing of, he suffers; what is joy to me, to him is pain. Surely Love is a wonderful thing. It is more precious than emeralds, and dearer than fine opals. Pearls and pomegranates cannot buy it, nor is it set forth in the market-place. It may not be purchased of the merchants, nor can it be weighed out in the balance for gold."

"The musicians will sit in their gallery," said the young Student, "and play upon their stringed instruments, and my love will dance to the sound of the harp and the violin. She will dance so lightly that her feet will not touch the floor, and the courtiers in their gay dresses will throng round her. But with me she will not dance, for I have no red rose to give her;" and he flung himself down on the grass, and buried his face in his hands, and wept.

"Why is he weeping?" asked a little Green Lizard, as he ran past him with his tail in the air.

"Why, indeed?" said a Butterfly, who was fluttering after a sunbeam.

"Why, indeed?" whispered a Daisy to his neighbor, in a soft, low voice.

"He is weeping for a red rose," said the Nightingale.

"For a red rose!" they cried; "how very ridiculous!" and the little Lizard, who was something of a cynic, laughed outright.

But the Nightingale understood the secret of the Student's sorrow, and she sat silent in the Oak-tree, and thought about the mystery of love.

Suddenly she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She passed through the grove like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed across the garden.

In the center of the grass-plot was standing a beautiful Rose-tree, and when she saw it, she flew over to it, and lit upon a spray.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are white," it answered; "as white as the foam of the sea, and whiter than the snow upon the mountain. But go to my brother who grows round the old sundial, and perhaps he will give what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing round the old sundial.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

"But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are yellow," it answered; "as yellow as the hair of the mermaiden who sits upon an amber throne, and yellower than the daffodil that blooms in the meadow before the mower comes with his scythe. But go to my brother who grows beneath the Student's window, and perhaps he will give you what you want."

So the Nightingale flew over to the Rose-tree that was growing beneath the Student's window.

"Give me a red rose," she cried, "and I will sing you my sweetest song."

But the Tree shook its head.

"My roses are red," it answered, "as red as the feet of the dove, and redder than the great fans of coral that wave and wave in the ocean-cavern. But the winter has chilled my veins, and the frost has nipped my buds, and the storm has broken my branches, and I shall have no roses at all this year."

"One red rose is all I want," cried the Nightingale,

"only one red rose! Is there no way by which I can get it?"

"There is a way," answered the Tree; "but it is so terrible that I dare not tell it to you."

"Tell it to me," said the Nightingale, "I am not afraid."

"If you want a red rose," said the Tree, "you must build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with your own heart's-blood. You must sing to me with your breast against a thorn. All night long you must sing to me, and the thorn must pierce your heart, and your life-blood must flow into my veins and become mine."

"Death is a great price to pay for a red rose," cried the Nightingale, "and Life is very dear to all. It is pleasant to sit in the green wood, and to watch the Sun in his chariot of gold, and the Moon in her chariot of pearl. Sweet is the scent of the hawthorn, and sweet are the bluebells that hide in the valley, and the heather that blows on the hill. Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?"

So she spread her brown wings for flight, and soared into the air. She swept over the garden like a shadow, and like a shadow she sailed through the grove.

The young Student was still lying on the grass, where she had left him, and the tears were not yet dry in his beautiful eyes.

"Be happy," cried the Nightingale, "be happy; you shall have your red rose. I will build it out of music by moonlight, and stain it with my own heart's-blood. All that I ask of you in return is that you will be a

true lover, for Love is wiser than Philosophy, though she is wise, and mightier than Power, though he is mighty. Flame-colored are his wings, and colored like flame is his body. His lips are sweet as honey, and his breath is like frankincense."

The Student looked up from the grass, and listened, but he could not understand what the Nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written down in books.

But the Oak-tree understood, and felt sad, for he was very fond of the little Nightingale who had built her nest in his branches.

"Sing me one last song," he whispered; "I shall feel very lonely when you are gone."

So the Nightingale sang to the Oak-tree, and her voice was like water bubbling from a silver jar.

When she had finished her song, the Student got up, and pulled a note-book and a lead-pencil out of his pocket.

"She has form," he said to himself, as he walked away through the grove—"that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style, without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." And he went into his room, and lay down on his little pallet-bed, and began to think of his love; and, after a time, he fell asleep.

And when the Moon shone in the heavens the Night-

ingale flew to the Rose-tree, and set her breast against the thorn. All night long she sang with her breast against the thorn, and the cold crystal Moon leaned down and listened. All night long she sang, and the thorn went deeper and deeper into her breast, and her life blood ebbed away from her.

She sang first of the birth of love in the heart of a boy and a girl. And on the top-most spray of the Rose-tree there blossomed a marvelous rose, petal followed petal, as song followed song. Pale was it, at first, as the mist that hangs over the river—pale as the feet of the morning, and silver as the wings of the dawn. As the shadow of a rose in a mirror of silver, as the shadow of a rose in a water-pool, so was the rose that blossomed on the topmost spray of the Tree.

But the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and louder and louder grew her song, for she sang of the birth of passion in the soul of a man and a maid.

And a delicate flush of pink came into the leaves of the rose, like the flush in the face of the bridegroom when he kisses the lips of the bride. But the thorn had not yet reached her heart, so the rose's heart remained white, for only a Nightingale's heart's-blood can crimson the heart of a rose.

And the Tree cried to the Nightingale to press closer against the thorn. "Press closer, little Nightingale," cried the Tree, "or the Day will come before the rose is finished."

So the Nightingale pressed closer against the thorn, and the thorn touched her heart and a fierce pang of pain shot through her. Bitter, bitter was the pain, and wilder and wilder grew her song, for she sang of the Love that is perfected by Death, of the Love that dies not in the tomb.

And the marvelous rose became crimson, like the rose of the eastern sky. Crimson was the girdle of petals, and crimson as a ruby was the heart.

But the Nightingale's voice grew fainter, and her little wings began to beat, and a film came over her eyes. Fainter and fainter grew her song, and she felt something choking her in her throat.

Then she gave one last burst of music. The white Moon heard it, and she forgot the dawn, and lingered on in the sky. The red rose heard it, and it trembled all over with ecstasy, and opened its petals to the cold morning air. Echo bore it to her purple cavern in the hills, and woke the sleeping shepherds from their dreams. It floated through the reeds of the river, and they carried its message to the sea.

"Look, look!" cried the Tree, "the rose is finished now"; but the Nightingale made no answer, for she was lying dead in the long grass, with the thorn in her heart.

And at noon the Student opened his window and looked out.

"Why, what a wonderful piece of luck!" he cried; "here is a red rose! I have never seen any rose like it in all my life. It is so beautiful that I am sure that it has a long Latin name;" and he leaned down and plucked it.

Then he put on his hat and ran up to the Professor's house with the rose in his hand.

The daughter of the Professor was sitting in the doorway winding blue silk on a reel, and her little dog was lying at her feet.

"You said that you would dance with me if I brought you a red rose," cried the Student. "Here is the reddest rose in all the world. You will wear it tonight next your heart, and as we dance together it will tell you how I love you."

But the girl frowned.

"I am afraid it will not go with my dress," she answered; "and, besides, the Chamberlain's nephew sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers."

"Well, upon my word, you are very ungrateful," said the Student angrily; and he threw the rose into the street, where it fell into the gutter, and a cartwheel went over it.

"Ungrateful!" said the girl. "I tell you what, you are very rude; and, after all, who are you? Only a Student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain's nephew has"; and she got up from her chair and went into the house.

"What a silly thing Love is," said the Student as he walked away. "It is not half as useful as Logic, for it does not prove anything, and it is always telling one of things that are not going to happen, and making one believe things that are not true. In fact, it is quite unpractical, and, as in this age to be practical is everything, I shall go back to Philosophy and study Metaphysics."

So he returned to his room and pulled out a great dusty book, and began to read.

"YOU SAID THAT YOU WOULD DANCE WITH ME IF I BROUGHT YOU A RED ROSE," CRIED THE STUDENT

RED POPPIES

by Alice Brown

ALICE BROWN

It is not surprising that Alice Brown, who has written so many lovely stories of New England, was born there—in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, six miles from the sea. "The country there is slightly rolling," she wrote not long ago to Grant Overton for his book, *Women who Make our Novels*, "with hills enough to give nice little dips and climbs in the winding roads, and the farms are fertile. My people were farmers. We lived in a little neighborhood on the road to Exeter, and at Exeter all the shopping was done. Our post-office was there and any neighbor who drove over brought back the mail for the rest.

"I went to the little district school until I was perhaps fourteen and then to the Robinson Female Seminary in Exeter, walking back and forth every day except in the winter months, and there I was graduated. After this I taught several years, hating it more every minute. And then I threw over my certainty to write."

Free at last to devote time to the stories with which her mind had long been so full, Alice Brown brought to her writing those she had known in her little New Hampshire neighborhood, and all that she had seen as she trudged along the country road to school—the fields and the hills and the flowers and the birds and the clouds. Perhaps, even, a field gay with red poppies.

During the years since, she has been on the editorial staff of *The Youth's Companion.* She has published many poems. She has written a prize play, *Children of Earth,* and others with perhaps none more frequently produced by Little Theatre groups than *Joint Owners in Spain,* which is included in her book, *One Act Plays.* She is the author of a book-length story written especially for girls, *The Secret of the Clan,* and of several novels. And she has written many distinguished short stories laid in other scenes as well as in her New England, collecting them in *Homespun and Gold* from which *Red Poppies* is taken, in *Vanishing Points* and *The Flying Teuton and Other Stories.*

RED POPPIES

By Alice Brown

GREENFIELD HALE sat in his dark kitchen that warm May evening, the windows opened to the breeze, and played his fiddle. He liked to play at this hour when the world was fading into dark, and it was nuts to him, he once owned to his niece Lucia, on her annual visit, to know the sounds were floating over the field to the ears of his neighbor next door, the sweeter they were to plague him most. Between him and Richard Downs, a third his own age, was a standing feud of the good old sort, over the field that lay between them. Two years ago, it had been for sale—that was the beginning of it all—and Hale had told his neighbor he meant to buy it, but only at a certain price. And when it was auctioned off it ran up amazingly, and once beyond the figure he had specified, Dick Downs, in good faith, began to bid, and the field came to him. But Hale, being prematurely old of a tired heart and confused by the haste and unexpectedness of it all, leaped to the conviction that it was willful treachery and abjured his neighbor who had heretofore been a sort of intimate, playing his bass viol to Hale's violin. At a following town meeting he "dressed him down," the neighbors said, in unmeasured terms, and Richard listened, grim and furious. After that, they spoke no more. But to Hale it was a hateful pleasure to remember how Dick had loved to play with him, especially on Sunday evenings, when Lucia, her

own tumultuous spirits answering the quietude of the time, would sing with them, and that it must be wormwood to him to hear the fiddle and Lucia's voice without him in their triumphing accord.

The kitchen where the old man sat was dark even by day, with its smoke-stained walls and yawning fireplace: for he was as obstinately set on old ways as in his mental habit, and at his hearth a tin kitchen was the oven decreed. Lucia, breaking the monotony of her dull months in the shoe shop by these intervals with him, took the matter of swinging her kettles from the crane and baking in the brick oven with gayest cheer. "Mercy sakes!" she said, she guessed a man could have his own way in his own kitchen. 'Twas a pretty tale if he couldn't. Lucia had caught quaint phrases from Grandma Nye, who brought her up, and used them with ease and satisfaction. They smacked of good old ways, and these she found immediate to herself. Besides, she was very fond of Uncle Greenfield, with the added sympathy of according natures, and the more indulgent of him as his tired heart beat less confidently.

Tonight she had been out for an hour in the dusk, and when she appeared in the kitchen doorway, Uncle Greenfield ended his tune with a little clever snap of the strings and laid his fiddle down.

"Light up," he said, in a voice that never lost its old imperiousness. He could hear her breathing through the dark. She might have been running or deep in some muscular task. "Been out?" he asked her.

Lucia did not answer for a moment. She lighted the lamp and disclosed herself to him, trim, compact, scarlet of cheek and lip, a fine, free, flashing girl with, he

was wont to say delightedly, a devil in her. But it was a merry devil only, not a wicked one. And the mate to it was what lighted his own black eyes and curved his beautiful thin lips into many kinds of smiles.

"What you want the light for?" she asked him.

"Want to spy on ye," he answered. "Want to know where ye been."

She stood for a moment looking at him meditatively, her black eyes lighted in reflection, but destitute of their usual spark. She was wondering whether it would be best to tell. Then suddenly her face went all over color, and the eyes seemed to break into shimmers of light. She laughed delightedly, pleased, evidently, with herself.

"What makes you think I've been doin' anything?" she evaded.

He drew out his pipe and slowly filled it, watching her meantime with a glance that declared itself innocent of guile.

"You went out," he said. "You didn't say where you was goin'. That's the way your father used to do. Little devil! you're just like him."

But this, she knew, was praise. Her father had been adored and was lamented always. She sat down and folded her firm, plump hands on the table.

"I s'pose if I told you, you'd go and tell," she challenged him.

"S'pose I would?" he inquired, pulling at his pipe. "What makes you s'pose I would?"

"Well," said she, with a delicate and grudging commendation in her tone, "you never've told yet, I'll say that for you. It's about Dick Downs."

He took out his pipe and stared at her, his eyes questioning, the brows bristling like fur.

"You ain't been passin' the time o' day with him?" he asked her. "You been whippin' up an acquaintance over the fence?"

Lucia yawned a little and leaned back in the low chair. She was not afraid of him.

"Why, I've known Dick Downs ever since I was little," she said. "You know I have. When I used to make you a visit in spring term and go to Number Three, we used to trot off holdin' hands, and he carried my dinner-pail, and the boys plagued him for it, and he settled with 'em. Whippin' up an acquaintance? Why, Dick and I were cronies when you were in your cradle."

She was a sassy jade, he had been used to tell her father; but he liked her for it. Still she was not to interfere with his dignified aversions.

"Don't you speak to him, Luce," he warned her. "I won't have it. Sure as you do, you pack your trunk and off you go."

Lucia was unmoved. Again she yawned behind a capable right hand.

"Well, I ain't spoken to him," she conceded. Then her face, that playground of mischiefs, broke up again. "Say, Uncle," she besought him, "don't you scold me. I've got to tell you or I sha'n't sleep for a week. I've got to tell!"

"Well," said he, with his severest mien, "tell away. What is it?"

She was overcome with mirth.

"Well," said she, "Dick Downs is color-blind."

"What's that got to do with you?"

"We used to have fun about it, makin' him tell which were the red flowers in teacher's bouquet. And once he had a brown jacket with a red weave in it, and he never knew the red was there, and we made him believe 'twas all over, and he was mad as fire because his mother'd bought it and she had to make him a black one 'fore he'd go to school."

"Well, mebbe he did. What's that to you?"

She clasped her hands on her knee, and gave way to ecstasy.

"Oh, Uncle Green!" she said, "it'll make him mad as fire. You know how he's sowed down this field?"

Hale nodded, with lips compressed. He had been mending the fence when Richard did his sowing, and he thought it disrespectful in so young a man to go on walking back and forth in silence, scattering seed, when an older man was near. Yet if Richard had spoken, he would not have answered. Perhaps that was what he wanted, to be hailed and not to speak. Lucia was laughing with an ever-bubbling mirth.

"I heard him tell Deacon Whitcomb what he meant to do with the field. You'd thought 'twas the greatest thing anybody ever undertook. The sorrel had got in. He was goin' to see what deep plowing would do. There wa'n't goin' to be a weed. Then he was goin' to roll it—"

"Well," conceded her uncle, with a grudging justice, "he has rolled it. 'Tis a pretty sight."

"Well, it'll be prettier before summer's over."

He looked at her in dark suspicion.

"You ain't been tearin' up a man's work?" he said.

"I don't hold to that. If you've done that, you'll have it made right and you'll foot the bill."

"I've footed it beforehand," said Lucia. She was quite unmoved. "I sent for three ounces of poppy-seed, and I mixed it with dirt, and I've been throwin' it by handfuls far as ever I could, and come July, his field'll be bloomed out in poppies, red as blood."

"Well, that won't hurt it nor him either," said her uncle. He was glad it proved no worse. "I don't see's that's much of a joke."

"Oh, but he won't know it, and we shall be seein' 'em bloom and he'll think they're the color o' grass. And some day somebody'll tell him about 'em, and he'll know I did it. It's a kind of a letter to him, Uncle—it's a writin' on the wall."

He was watching her closely. She was endlessly delightful in her piquing changes.

"Well," he asked, "what's in the letter? What's the writin' say?"

But Lucia was instantly sleepy. She got up, considered aloud whether she should make bread, and took the cat under her arm.

" 'Night, Uncle," she said, with her most honeyed smile. "You just wait till next July."

So he waited, forgetting such child's play, indeed, in the reveries of a man who did not, he owned to himself, feel as much like work as common, and absorbed more and more in fiddle reveries, because they were unchanged. But Lucia waited with the impatience of a child. She watched Richard going back and forth, yet without seeming to lift an eyelid, and once when old Ann March failed him on washing day, she saw him,

the next Sunday morning, himself hanging out his clothes. She was seated in the back porch shelling peas for dinner, and Uncle Greenfield sat near by, reading the life of Lincoln, his concession to the seriousness of the day, to be laid aside presently for an interval with the hymn tunes also conformable and more beloved.

"It's a shame!" Lucia burst forth.

She had spoken before prudence had time to hinder.

He looked up at her.

"What's a shame?" he asked.

"Oh, nothin'! Yes, 'tis, too. It's a shame Dick Downs is doin' his own washin'! What a way to live! He'd ought to marry, that's what he ought to do."

"Well," said Uncle Greenfield absently, "they say he's goin' with Mary Keith. If he gets her, she'll keep him up to the mark."

The pan of unshelled peas slid from her lap, and she plunged for it.

"There! there!" said Uncle Greenfield, "don't you move so quick. You go like a dart. Can't nobody keep up with ye."

She was soberly picking up the pods. Though her head was low, the color had gone out of her face and the mouth quivered perceptibly. Uncle Greenfield thought she was going to cry.

"There! there!" he said again gently, thinking he had hurt her. "It's well you can move quick. Shows how young you be. I guess some o' the rest of us wish we could go like a cat, same's you do."

That afternoon she saw them, Dick and Mary Keith, driving slowly past. Mary had on her new green muslin

—Lucia knew well how the lace collar came up round her white throat to the golden line of her hair—and Dick looked as unlike as possible to a man who did his own washing. He sat straight and tall, and his square shoulders seemed to her to fill the world. Opposite the field he drew in his horse, and they began looking at his house, seen from the bare east side. Dick even gesticulated, and pointed with his whip. Lucia knew what he was saying. He was telling Mary they could throw out a piazza there, and set woodbine round it. Lucia knew that was what she would do. But Mary Keith was looking now at the field. She bent forward and peered across him, and now Dick himself looked. She was telling him about the poppies, Lucia knew. Suddenly he gave Mary the reins and jumped out over the wheel. He took a flying leap over the board fence and Lucia, while she loved the muscular splendor of it, strengthened herself in a pang of disgust that a man could put himself out to perform for Mary Keith. Dick had searched about and now, recognizing it by the shape, he picked a poppy. He held it up to Mary and she nodded. Then he picked another, and here Lucia kept a tight hold upon herself, lest she call to them, "Those are my poppies. You let my poppies be!" But Dick was stepping soberly over the fence, and before he got into the wagon he put out his hand and gave Mary Keith the scarlet flowers. She bent over them, and Lucia thought she was setting them at her belt. Then Dick had taken the reins from her and they drove away.

The peas for dinner were very sweet, but Lucia had a headache, she said, and hardly ate at all.

"You better lay down," Uncle Greenfield bade her.

" 'Long about five o'clock I'm goin' to poke off up to the buryin'-ground and see if they've fixed them stones. I sha'n't be back afore six."

Lucia did go up to her chamber, but it was only to escape his kind solicitude. For the first time, she blamed Uncle Greenfield. She almost hated him. What business had a man to get up a quarrel with an unoffending neighbor, and drag everybody else into it? She sat there at her window overlooking the poppy field, gloom in her eyes and at her heart the sick feeling of irrevocable deeds. The afternoon slipped by and the country road was still. Everybody, she knew, had gone another way. On a day like this, with the breeze right and a booming sea from yesterday's high wind, those who had teams would drive to the Point. Only the solitary, like Dick Downs who had some one to be deliciously alone with, would take the other road, stop at Langham for supper and come home by moonlight. Lucia, thirsty for the pleasures fitted to her pulsing youth, planned it all out for them, and thought, in her innocence of what age is, that she felt old. It was after six and Uncle Greenfield had not come. The world grew stiller every minute, and suddenly the quiet of it was unbearable. She was not thinking now, only driven by a tumultuous frenzy stronger far than she. It took her from her low chair there by the window and blew her out of doors, over the fence—she climbed it lightly, thinking with a swift, sick pang of Dick's high jump—and ran through the soft ground to the wilding poppies. It had been a good season for them, and they had taken root in multitudes. There they burned and trembled to the breeze, gay, silken ladies, full of pride and languor. She

bent to them and began picking swiftly with deft motions of her clever hands, and when the bruised bunch crowded she held them under her arms, and the poppy juice splashed her and stained her dress, the sleeves rolled high, and with the wine of them upon her, and the strange medicinal odor rising, she felt drunk with the acrid magic of it all, and the significance of them touched her in a dreamy way she could not have interpreted, the trance that means forgetfulness, the beauty that allures. The blood was in her face from her rage of life, and stooping over the flowers, she saw a dark cloud now instead of the green, red-stained field. And suddenly there came a voice behind her, one she had not heard all summer long.

"What you doin' here?" Dick Downs was asking her. "What you doin' in my field?"

She turned and faced him, the bruised poppies held tightly to her breast. She looked at him straight, wishing the dark cloud would let her see more clearly, and asking her heart, all in a panic suddenly, whether he was angry with her. He did not seem to be. He stood there, hat off, the light on his yellow hair and sanguine face, and to Lucia, he looked all golden. Like the gods she had never heard of, but for whom there is a cry in every maiden's heart. Suddenly her rage again enveloped her.

"I don't care whether it's your field nor whether it ain't," she told him. "I'm pickin' my poppies, that's what I'm doin', and you can do as you see fit."

"Are them poppies—all of 'em?"

He bent forward, looking at them curiously, and Lucia could have laughed, it was so exactly like the way

he had stared those years ago when they told him his jacket was all red.

"Yes," she said. "They're poppies. They're mine."

He had straightened, and now he was looking at her, moved, she saw, contemplative yet not angry.

"Yours, be they?" he was saying. "How come they to be yours?"

Lucia had meant to tell him some time, but never in this way. Yet everything was changed, now that Mary Keith had come into the game, and she would tell him as hatefully as might be. She would have a feud with him like uncle. It would be easier so.

"They're my poppies," she said, "because I sowed 'em."

His mouth twitched a little. He seemed on the point of laughing at her, and it made her furious.

"How'd you manage it?" he asked. But she was dumb, thinking out the most cruel thing to say, and he added, "What'd you do it for?"

"I wanted some poppies," Lucia answered haughtily. "I've got 'em, too." She looked down at the silken, weeping mass in her arms, and added irrepressibly, "All but two. And I know what became of 'em. I know as well as I want to. You gave them away to Mary Keith. If she was here, I'd pull 'em out of her belt and slap her with 'em."

"Why, you little devil!" said Dick. He was smiling broadly now. This was what Uncle Greenfield called her at her worst, and from him she knew, it meant indulgent love. "What do you want 'em for?"

"Because I want 'em," she said obstinately. "They're my poppies." She turned away from him. "I'm goin'

now. I've tracked up your seeded field, and I don't care if I have. It's uncle's field by rights. You've no business with it anyways."

"Hang the field!" he roared after her. "I wish the field was sunk."

She heard his stride behind her, and in her haste her little shoes sank further into the soft mold. His hand was on her shoulder and he whirled her round.

"Lucy, don't cry," he begged. "Oh, Lucy, what you cryin' for?"

She looked down because she would not face him, and in her general sorrow for herself the stain might have been blood. For the moment the poppies seemed to be roses, wounding her with thorns.

"It's my arms," she said, sobbing. "I've hurt my arms. The briers—"

He had loosed her hands and torn the poppies from her. There they lay at her feet, a bruised, flaring ruin of silk and splendor.

"Little fool!" said Dick. "Pretty arms! darlin' arms! Oh, Luce, why ain't you spoke to me all summer?"

But she couldn't speak to him now, because there in the open field he was kissing her, and for the moment she laid her face against his coat and clung to him. Suddenly she pushed him from her.

"Where's Mary Keith?" she cried. "Oh, I'm ashamed of both of us!"

He laughed, and drew her back again, but she resisted.

"Mary Keith?" he said. "I've been tellin' Mary Keith about you, and how if she took me she'd take a man that hadn't much to give her but to say he'd stick to her

through thick and thin. And she wouldn't take me, and I respected her for it. I told her I wouldn't if I's in her place."

"But you asked her," she flashed at him jealously. "You'd have married her."

"I'd marry a dozen girls, one after the other," said Dick—he was the savage now—"to show you you couldn't stop speakin' to me a whole summer and not get punished for it. What'd you sow these for, you little spitfire?"

She was crying softly.

"I didn't sow 'em," she said, in piteous intervals. "I wrote 'em. 'Twas a letter, Dick, to you. I thought somebody'd tell you they were here and you'd remember how I was pickin' 'em in Gran'ma Nye's garden that time, and you come in and asked me what color they were, and I said, 'Red, and they're the handsomest flower that blows.' And you said, 'That's you, Luce. You're the handsomest flower that blows.' And I ain't a spitfire. Only I thought you might remember."

He stood looking at her in hopeless wonder over the feminine that lays its labyrinth underground when the straight, sunlit path would serve.

"Yes," he said, "I remember. But what'd you stop speakin' to me for?"

"Why, I had to," she flamed. "Uncle stopped—and he's got heart-disease."

But whether he took that for a cogent reason, it did not matter. They were in their dream, and every instant the walls that shut them from the outer world grew magically higher.

"Lucy!" came a voice into the dream. "Where be you, Lucy?"

She started from him, torn from her paradise by the old summons to silly spite.

"It's uncle," she told him breathlessly. "We can't do this, Dick. We can't speak. It would kill him, pretty nigh. I shouldn't dare to. Good-by, dear. Oh, good-by!"

He let her go, eagerly almost, she thought, and strode off to the fence bordering the road. She climbed the fence on her side, and dropped lightly into her own yard, and there was Uncle Greenfield, tired, dazed even, it seemed, standing in the porch. He was relieved to see her. When he was tired he felt alone, and, knowing that, she went up to him and put a hand on his arm, and persuaded him into his big chair. He seemed pathetically old and frail, his dark eyes full of the pathos of age that recognizes its own face at last. It was not sadness in the look, it was not regret or any poignancy of pain. But he had been thinking of moving things and they abode with him.

"What do you s'pose, Lucy?" he said, when his breath was equable again. "I found the lot was mowed, and somebody'd left the hay in a little cock t'other side the wall. And Hiram Soule was passin' by, and I asked him who he s'posed done it, and he said 'twas young Downs over here, thinkin' I wa'n't gettin' about so much as common."

Some one was at the side of the house. His foot was on the step, and Uncle Greenfield had no time for a repulse.

"Mr. Hale," said Dick, "I don't know's you want to

talk business Sunday, but I come over to ask if you'll make me an offer for that field."

Uncle Greenfield sat and looked at the floor musingly and Lucia slid a step nearer and touched his arm.

"Well, no, Dick," said he, gently, as became one who had been thinking that afternoon about the end of mortal things. "I don't know's I've got any use for real estate, unless 'twas to leave it to Lucy here, for sowin' blooms; but if you'd step over this evenin' with your bass viol, mebbe we could jine in and Lucy'd sing a hymn."

A CHAPARRAL PRINCE

by O. Henry

O. HENRY

It was O. Henry who called New York *Bagdad on the Subway*. But from the days when he was a boy in Greensboro, North Carolina, life itself was *Bagdad* to him.

When his mother died, his Aunt Evelina took care of William Sydney Porter, which was his real name. Miss Lina was also head of Will's school, and it was she who used to invite the scholars to the house to roast chestnuts or barbecue quail before the open fire, to read aloud and play Will's story-telling game in which each contributed to the plot.

Will liked to draw as well as to write. And when, later, as clerk in his uncle's drug store, he wrote a description of the town's quaint characters and illustrated it, his production was so realistic that some of those portrayed refused to speak to him. During his free time, Will was apt to go off under the trees with a book. He often said he read more books between his thirteenth and nineteenth years than during all the rest of his life, chiefly those from his doctor father's library.

When he was eighteen and not well, he went to a ranch in Texas. He then hoped to become an artist. But while he was making fast friends of the cow-boys, his interest shifted to writing. From then on, wherever he was, in Central America, in Texas, Louisiana and many other parts of the United States, his keen eyes were alert to the people he met and the stories he found in their lives. He worked intensely upon what he wrote. "But you can't write a story that's got any life in it just by sitting at a writing table," he once said. "You've got to get out into the streets, into the crowds, talk with people and feel the rush and throb of life."

And so it is that in O. Henry's books, in *Heart of the West* from which *A Chaparral Prince* is taken, in *The Four Million, Cabbages and Kings, Roads of Destiny* and the others, we find just that—people and the rush and throb of life, his Bagdad.

A CHAPARRAL PRINCE

By O. Henry

NINE o'clock at last, and the drudging toil of the day was ended. Lena climbed to her room in the third half-story of the Quarrymen's Hotel. Since daylight she had slaved, doing the work of a full-grown woman, scrubbing the floors, washing the heavy ironstone plates and cups, making the beds, and supplying the insatiate demands for wood and water in that turbulent and depressing hostelry.

The din of the day's quarrying was over—the blasting and drilling, the creaking of the great cranes, the shouts of the foremen, the backing and shifting of the flat-cars hauling the heavy blocks of limestone. Down in the hotel office three or four of the laborers were growling and swearing over a belated game of checkers. Heavy odors of stewed meat, hot grease, and cheap coffee hung like a depressing fog about the house.

Lena lit the stump of a candle and sat limply upon her wooden chair. She was eleven years old, thin and ill-nourished. Her back and limbs were sore and aching. But the ache in her heart made the biggest trouble. The last straw had been added to the burden upon her small shoulders. They had taken away Grimm. Always at night, however tired she might be, she had turned to Grimm for comfort and hope. Each time had Grimm whispered to her that the prince or the fairy would come and deliver her out of the wicked enchant-

ment. Every night she had taken fresh courage and strength from Grimm.

To whatever tale she read she found an analogy in her own condition. The woodcutter's lost child, the unhappy goose girl, the persecuted stepdaughter, the little maiden imprisoned in the witch's hut—all these were but transparent disguises for Lena, the overworked kitchenmaid in the Quarrymen's Hotel. And always when the extremity was direst came the good fairy or the gallant prince to the rescue.

So, here in the ogre's castle, enslaved by a wicked spell, Lena had leaned upon Grimm and waited, longing for the powers of goodness to prevail. But on the day before Mrs. Maloney had found the book in her room and had carried it away, declaring sharply that it would not do for servants to read at night; they lost sleep and did not work briskly the next day. Can one only eleven years old, living away from one's mamma and never having any time to play, live entirely deprived of Grimm? Just try it once and you will see what a difficult thing it is.

Lena's home was in Texas, away up among the little mountains on the Pedernales River, in a little town called Fredericksburg. They are all German people who live in Fredericksburg. Of evenings they sit at little tables along the sidewalk and drink beer and play pinochle and scat. They are very thrifty people.

Thriftiest among them was Peter Hildesmuller, Lena's father. And that is why Lena was sent to work in the hotel at the quarries, thirty miles away. She earned three dollars every week there, and Peter added her wages to his well-guarded store. Peter had an ambition

to become as rich as his neighbor, Hugo Heffelbauer, who smoked a meerschaum pipe three feet long and had wiener schnitzel and hassenpfeffer for dinner every day in the week. And now Lena was quite old enough to work and assist in the accumulation of riches. But conjecture, if you can, what it means to be sentenced at eleven years of age from a home in the pleasant little Rhine village to hard labor in the ogre's castle, where you must fly to serve the ogres, while they devour cattle and sheep, growling fiercely as they stamp white limestone dust from their great shoes for you to sweep and scour with your weak, aching fingers. And then—to have Grimm taken away from you!

Lena raised the lid of an old empty case that had once contained canned corn and got out a sheet of paper and a piece of pencil. She was going to write a letter to her mamma. Tommy Ryan was going to post it for her at Ballinger's. Tommy was seventeen, worked in the quarries, went home to Ballinger's every night, and was now waiting in the shadows under Lena's window for her to throw the letter out to him. That was the only way she could send a letter to Fredericksburg. Mrs. Maloney did not like for her to write letters.

The stump of candle was burning low, so Lena hastily bit the wood from around the lead of her pencil and began. This is the letter she wrote:

DEAREST MAMMA:—I want so much to see you. And Gretel and Claus and Heinrich and little Adolf. I am so tired. I want to see you. Today I was slapped by Mrs. Maloney and had no supper. I could not bring in enough wood, for my hand hurt. She took my book yesterday. I mean *Grimm's Fairy Tales,* which Uncle Leo gave me. It did not hurt any one for me to read the book. I

try to work as well as I can, but there is so much to do. I read only a little bit every night. Dear mamma, I shall tell you what I am going to do. Unless you send for me tomorrow to bring me home I shall go to a deep place I know in the river and drown. It is wicked to drown, I suppose, but I wanted to see you, and there is no one else. I am very tired, and Tommy is waiting for the letter. You will excuse me, mamma, if I do it.

Your respectful and loving daughter,

LENA.

Tommy was still waiting faithfully when the letter was concluded, and when Lena dropped it out she saw him pick it up and start up the steep hillside. Without undressing she blew out the candle and curled herself upon the mattress on the floor.

At 10:30 o'clock old man Ballinger came out of his house in his stocking feet and leaned over the gate, smoking his pipe. He looked down the big road, white in the moonshine, and rubbed one ankle with the toe of his other foot. It was time for the Fredericksburg mail to come pattering up the road.

Old man Ballinger had waited only a few minutes when he heard the lively hoofbeats of Fritz's team of little black mules, and very soon afterward his covered spring wagon stood in front of the gate. Fritz's big spectacles flashed in the moonlight and his tremendous voice shouted a greeting to the postmaster of Ballinger's. The mail-carrier jumped out and took the bridles from the mules, for he always fed them oats at Ballinger's.

While the mules were eating from their feed bags old man Ballinger brought out the mail sack and threw it into the wagon.

Fritz Bergmann was a man of three sentiments—

or to be more accurate—four, the pair of mules deserving to be reckoned individually. Those mules were the chief interest and joy of his existence. Next came the ruler of his country and Lena Hildesmuller.

"Tell me," said Fritz, when he was ready to start, "contains the sacks a letter to Frau Hildesmuller from the little Lena at the quarries? One came in the last mail to say that she is a little sick, already. Her mamma is very anxious to hear again."

"Yes," said old man Ballinger, "thar's a letter for Mrs. Helterskelter, or some sich name. Tommy Ryan brung it over when he come. Her little gal workin' over thar, you say?"

"In the hotel," shouted Fritz, as he gathered up the lines; "eleven years old and not bigger as a frankfurter. The close-fist of a Peter Hildesmuller!—some day shall I with a big club pound that man's dummkopf—all in and out the town. Perhaps in this letter Lena will say that she is yet feeling better. So, her mamma will be glad. *Auf wiedersehen,* Herr Ballinger—your feets will take cold out in the night air."

"So long, Fritzy," said old man Ballinger. "You got a nice cool night for your drive."

Up the road went the little black mules at their steady trot, while Fritz thundered at them occasional words of endearment and cheer.

These fancies occupied the mind of the mail-carrier until he reached the big post oak forest, eight miles from Ballinger's. Here his ruminations were scattered by the sudden flash and report of pistols and a whooping as if from a whole tribe of Indians. A band of galloping centaurs closed in around the mail wagon.

One of them leaned over the front wheel, covered the driver with his revolver, and ordered him to stop. Others caught at the bridles of Donder and Blitzen.

"Donnerwetter!" shouted Fritz, with all his tremendous voice—"wass ist? Release your hands from dose mules. Ve vas der United States mail!"

"Hurry up, Dutch!" drawled a melancholy voice. "Don't you know when you're in a stick-up? Reverse your mules and climb out of the cart."

It is due to the breadth of Hondo Bill's demerit and the largeness of his achievements to state that the holding up of the Fredericksburg mail was not perpetrated by way of an exploit. As the lion while in the pursuit of prey commensurate to his prowess might set a frivolous foot upon a casual rabbit in his path, so Hondo Bill and his gang had swooped sportively upon the pacific transport of Meinherr Fritz.

The real work of their sinister night ride was over. Fritz and his mail bag and his mules came as a gentle relaxation, grateful after the arduous duties of their profession. Twenty miles to the southeast stood a train with a killed engine, hysterical passengers and a looted express and mail car. That represented the serious occupation of Hondo Bill and his gang. With a fairly rich prize of currency and silver the robbers were making a wide detour to the west through the less populous country, intending to seek safety in Mexico by means of some fordable spot on the Rio Grande. The booty from the train had melted the desperate bushrangers to jovial and happy skylarkers.

Trembling with outraged dignity and no little personal apprehension, Fritz climbed out to the road after

replacing his suddenly removed spectacles. The band had dismounted and were singing, capering, and whooping, thus expressing their satisfied delight in the life of a jolly outlaw. Rattlesnake Rogers, who stood at the heads of the mules, jerked a little too vigorously at the rein of the tender-mouthed Donder, who reared and emitted a loud, protesting snort of pain. Instantly Fritz, with a scream of anger, flew at the bulky Rogers and began to assiduously pommel that surprised freebooter with his fists.

"Villain!" shouted Fritz, "dog, bigstiff! Dot mule he has a soreness by his mouth. I vill knock off your shoulders mit your head—robbermans!"

"Yi-yi!" howled Rattlesnake, roaring with laughter and ducking his head, "somebody git this here sourkrout off'n me!"

One of the band yanked Fritz back by the coat-tail, and the woods rang with Rattlesnake's vociferous comments.

"The dog-goned little wienerwurst," he yelled, amiably. "He's not so much of a skunk, for a Dutchman. Took up for his animile plum quick, didn't he? I like to see a man like his hoss, even if it is a mule. The dad-blamed little Limburger he went for me, didn't he! Whoa, now, muley—I ain't a-goin' to hurt your mouth agin any more."

Perhaps the mail would not have been tampered with had not Ben Moody, the lieutenant, possessed certain wisdom that seemed to promise more spoils.

"Say, Cap," he said, addressing Hondo Bill, "there's liable to be good pickings in these mail sacks. I've done some hoss tradin' with these Dutchmen around Freder-

icksburg, and I know the style of the varmints. There's big money goes through the mails to that town. Them Dutch risk a thousand dollars sent wrapped in a piece of paper before they'd pay the banks to handle the money."

Hondo Bill, six feet two, gentle of voice and impulsive in action, was dragging the sacks from the rear of the wagon before Moody had finished his speech. A knife shone in his hand, and they heard the ripping sound as it bit through the tough canvas. The outlaws crowded around and began tearing open letters and packages, enlivening their labors by swearing affably at the writers, who seemed to have conspired to confute the prediction of Ben Moody. Not a dollar was found in the Fredericksburg mail.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Hondo Bill to the mail-carrier in solemn tones, "to be packing around such a lot of old, trashy paper as this. What d'you mean by it, anyhow? Where do you Dutchers keep your money at?"

The Ballinger mail sack opened like a cocoon under Hondo's knife. It contained but a handful of mail. Fritz had been fuming with terror and excitement until this sack was reached. He now remembered Lena's letter. He addressed the leader of the band, asking him that that particular missive be spared.

"Much obliged, Dutch," he said to the disturbed carrier. "I guess that's the letter we want. Got spondulicks in it, ain't it? Here she is. Make a light, boys."

Hondo found and tore open the letter to Mrs. Hildesmuller. The others stood about, lighting twisted-up letters one from another. Hondo gazed with mute dis-

approval at the single sheet of paper covered with the angular German script.

"Whatever is this you've humbugged us with, Dutchy? You call this here a valuable letter? That's a mighty low-down trick to play on your friends what come along to help you distribute your mail."

"That's Chiny writin'," said Sandy Grundy, peering over Hondo's shoulder.

"You're off your kazip," declared another of the gang, an effective youth, covered with silk handkerchiefs and nickel plating. "That's shorthand. I seen 'em do it once in court."

"Ach, no, no, no—dot is German," said Fritz. "It is no more as a little girl writing a letter to her mamma. One poor little girl, sick and vorking hard avay from home. Ach! it is a shame. Good Mr. Robberman, you vill please let me have dot letter?"

"What the devil do you take us for, old Pretzels?" said Hondo with sudden and surprising severity. "You ain't presumin' to insinuate that we gents ain't possessed of sufficient politeness for to take an interest in the miss's health, are you? Now, you go on, and you read that scratchin' out loud and in plain United States language to this here company of educated society."

Hondo twirled his six-shooter by its trigger guard and stood towering above the little German, who at once began to read the letter, translating the simple words into English. The gang of rovers stood in absolute silence, listening intently.

"How old is that kid?" asked Hondo when the letter was done.

"Eleven," said Fritz.

"And where is she at?"

"At dose rock quarries—vorking. Ach, mein Gott —little Lena, she speak of drowning. I do not know if she vill do it, but if she shall I schwear I vill dot Peter Hildesmuller shoot mit a gun."

"You Dutchers," said Hondo Bill, his voice swelling with fine contempt, "make me plenty tired. Hirin' out your kids to work when they ought to be playin' dolls in the sand. I reckon we'll fix your clock for a while just to show what we think of you. Here, boys!"

Hondo Bill parleyed aside briefly with his band, and then they seized Fritz and conveyed him off the road to one side. Here they bound him fast to a tree with a couple of lariats. His team they tied to another tree near by.

"We ain't going to hurt you bad," said Hondo reassuringly. " 'Twon't hurt you to be tied up for a while. We will now pass you the time of day, as it is up to us to depart. Ausgespielt—nixcumrous, Dutchy. Don't get any more impatience."

Fritz heard a great squeaking of saddles as the men mounted their horses. Then a loud yell and a great clatter of hoofs as they galloped pell-mell back along the Fredericksburg road.

For more than two hours Fritz sat against his tree, tightly but not painfully bound. Then from the reaction after his exciting adventure he sank into slumber. How long he slept he knew not, but he was at last awakened by a rough shake. Hands were untying his ropes. He was lifted to his feet, dazed, confused in mind, and weary of body. Rubbing his eyes, he looked and saw that he was again in the midst of the same band of ter-

rible bandits. They shoved him up to the seat of his wagon and placed the lines in his hands.

"Hit it out for home, Dutch," said Hondo Bill's voice commandingly. "You've given us lots of trouble and we're pleased to see the back of your neck. Spiel! Zwei bier! Vamoose!"

Hondo reached out and gave Blitzen a smart cut with his quirt.

The little mules sprang ahead, glad to be moving again. Fritz urged them along, himself dizzy and muddled over his fearful adventure.

According to schedule time, he should have reached Fredericksburg at daylight. As it was, he drove down the long street of the town at eleven o'clock A.M. He had to pass Peter Hildesmuller's house on his way to the post-office. He stopped his team at the gate and called. But Frau Hildesmuller was watching for him. Out rushed the whole family of Hildesmullers.

Frau Hildesmuller, fat and flushed, inquired if he had a letter from Lena, and then Fritz raised his voice and told the tale of his adventure. He told the contents of the letter that the robber had made him read, and then Frau Hildesmuller broke into wild weeping. Her little Lena drown herself! Why had they sent her from home? What could be done? Perhaps it would be too late by the time they could send for her now. Peter Hildesmuller dropped his meerschaum on the walk and it shivered into pieces.

"Woman!" he roared at his wife, "why did you let that child go away? It is your fault if she comes home to us no more."

Every one knew that it was Peter Hildesmuller's fault, so they paid no attention to his words.

A moment afterward a strange, faint voice was heard to call: "Mamma!" Frau Hildesmuller at first thought it was Lena's spirit calling, and then she rushed to the rear of Fritz's covered wagon, and, with a loud shriek of joy, caught up Lena herself, covering her pale little face with kisses and smothering her with hugs. Lena's eyes were heavy with the deep slumber of exhaustion, but she smiled and lay close to the one she had longed to see. There among the mail sacks, covered in a nest of strange blankets and comforters, she had lain asleep until wakened by the voices around her.

Fritz stared at her with eyes that bulged behind his spectacles.

"Gott in Himmel!" he shouted. "How did you get in that wagon? Am I going crazy as well as to be murdered and hanged by robbers this day?"

"You brought her to us, Fritz," cried Frau Hildesmuller. "How can we ever thank you enough?"

"Tell mamma how you came in Fritz's wagon," said Frau Hildesmuller.

"I don't know," said Lena. "But I know how I got away from the hotel. The Prince brought me."

"By the Emperor's crown!" shouted Fritz, "we are all going crazy."

"I always knew he would come," said Lena, sitting down on her bundle of bedclothes on the sidewalk. "Last night he came with his armed knights and captured the ogre's castle. They broke the dishes and kicked down the doors. They pitched Mr. Maloney into a barrel of rain water and threw flour all over Mrs. Maloney.

"THE PRINCE BROUGHT ME"

The workmen in the hotel jumped out of the windows and ran into the woods when the knights began firing their guns. They wakened me up and I peeped down the stair. And then the Prince came up and wrapped me in the bedclothes and carried me out. He was so tall and strong and fine. His face was as rough as a scrubbing brush, and he talked soft and kind and smelled of schnapps. He took me on his horse before him and we rode away among the knights. He held me close and I went to sleep that way, and didn't wake up till I got home."

"Rubbish!" cried Fritz Bergmann. "Fairy tales! How did you come from the quarries to my wagon?"

"The Prince brought me," said Lena, confidently.

And to this day the good people of Fredericksburg haven't been able to make her give any other explanation.

THE MILL OF DREAMS

by Eleanor Farjeon

ELEANOR FARJEON

ELEANOR FARJEON's grandfather was the famous actor, Joseph Jefferson; her father, B. L. Farjeon, the novelist. So it is not strange that the little girl, in a home where every one was engrossed in the land of fancy, should be writing before any one knew that she could, nor that one of her first works was a play, *Snow-White*, in which Snow-White's mother died as the curtain rose and the King, entering, observed, "Ah, she is dead. I must marry again."

She wrote her first poem when she was seven, addressing it to a faithless lover:

> My heart has never beat before
> As it did beat just now.
> I want you but to keep to me
> And I'll give my hand to thou.

Eleanor Farjeon was born in London on the banks of the Thames and since she was three years old has lived within a mile of Hampstead Heath. While still in her teens she wrote lyrics and librettos for her brother, Harry Farjeon, now an accomplished composer. At this time her work so interested W. S. Gilbert of the famous Gilbert and Sullivan operas that he urged her to continue what she had so happily begun.

She has done so. No year since has passed without Eleanor Farjeon's writing the stories and poems and songs so widely loved for their exquisite fancy, their humor and their beauty. For a long time her imaginary world of people and adventures was more to her than real people and real adventures. Today, however, people and all that they do equally fascinate her. And cooking and gardening are as interesting to her as writing. "Sometimes more so," she says.

The Mill of Dreams is one of the stories in *Martin Pippin in the Apple Orchard*. And other of her books which have been especially enjoyed are *Joan's Door* and *The Italian Peep-Show*.

THE MILL OF DREAMS

By Eleanor Farjeon

THERE was once, dear maidens, a girl who lived in a mill on the Sidlesham marshes. But in those days the marshlands were meadowlands, with streams running in from the coast, so that their water was brackish and salt. And sometimes the girl dipped her finger in the water and sucked it and tasted the sea. And the taste made storms rise in her heart. Her name was Helen.

The mill-house was a gaunt and gloomy building of stone, as gray as sleep, weatherstained with dreams. It had fine proportions, and looked like a noble prison. And in fact, if a prison is the lockhouse of secrets, it was one. The great millstones ground day and night, and what the world sent in as corn it got back as flour. And as to the secrets of the grinding it asked no questions, because to the world results are everything. It understands death better than sorrow, marriage better than love, and birth better than creation. And the millstones of joy and pain, grinding dreams into bread, it seldom hears. But Helen heard them, and they were all the knowledge she had of life; for if the mill was a prison of dreams it was her prison too.

Her father the miller was a harsh man and dark; he was dark within and without. Her mother was dead; she did not remember her. As she grew up she did little by little the work of the big place. She was her father's servant, and he kept her as close to her work as he kept

his millstones to theirs. He was morose, and welcomed no company. Gayety he hated. Helen knew no songs, for she had heard none. From morning till night she worked for her father. When she had done all her other work she spun flax into linen for shirts and gowns, and wool for stockings and vests. If she went outside the mill-house, it was only for a few steps for a few moments. She wasn't two miles from the sea, but she had never seen it. But she tasted the salt water and smelt the salt wind.

Like all things that grow up away from the light, she was pale. Her oval face was like ivory, and her lips, instead of being scarlet, had the tender red of apple-blossom, after the unfolding of the bright bud. Her hair was black and smooth and heavy, and lay on either side of her face like a starling's wings. Her eyes too were as black as midnight, and sometimes like midnight they were deep and sightless. But when she was neither working nor spinning she would steal away to the millstones, and stand there watching and listening. And then there were two stars in the midnight. She came away from those stolen times powdered with flour. Her black hair and her brows and lashes, her old blue gown, her rough hands and fair neck, and her white face—all that was dark and pale in her was merged in a mist, and seen only through the clinging dust of the millstones. She would try to wipe off all the evidences of her secret occasions, but her father generally knew. Had he known by nothing else, he need only have looked at her eyes before they lost their starlight.

One day when she was seventeen years old there was a knock at the mill-house door. Nobody ever knocked.

Her father was the only man who came in and went out. The mill stood solitary in those days. The face of the country has since been changed by man and God, but at that time there were no habitations in sight. At regular times the peasants brought their grain and fetched their meal; but the miller kept his daughter away from his custom. He never said why. Doubtless at the back of his mind was the thought of losing what was useful to him. Most parents have their ways of trying to keep their children; in some it is this way, in others that; not many learn to keep them by letting them go.

So when the knock came at the door, it was the strangest thing that had ever happened in Helen's life. She ran to the door and stood with her hand on the heavy wooden bar that fell across it into a great socket. Her heart beat fast. Before we know a thing it is a thousand things. Only one thing would be there when she lifted the bar. But as she stood with her hand upon it, a host of presences hovered on the other side. A knight in armor, a king in his gold crown, a god in the guise of a beggar, an angel with a sword; a dragon even; a woman to be her friend; her mother . . . a child . . .

"Would it be better not to open?" thought Helen. For then she would never know. Yes, then she could run to her millstones and fling them her thoughts in the husk, and listen, listen while they ground them into dreams. What knowledge would be better than that? What would she lose by opening the door?

But she had to open the door.

Outside on the stones stood a common lad. He might have been three years older than she. He had a cap with

a hole in it in his hand, and a shabby jersey that left his brown neck bare. He was whistling when she lifted the bar, but he stopped as the door fell back, and gave Helen a quick and careless look.

"Can I have a bit of bread?" he asked.

Helen stared at him without answering. She was so unused to people that her mind had to be summoned from a world of ghosts before she could hear and utter real words. The boy waited for her to speak, but, as she did not, shrugged his shoulders and turned away whistling his tune.

Then she understood that he was going, and she ran after him quickly and touched his sleeve. He turned again, expecting her to speak; but she was still dumb.

"Thought better of it?" he said.

Helen said slowly, "Why did you ask me for bread?"

"Why?" He looked her up and down. "To mend my boots with, of course."

She looked at his boots.

"You silly thing," grinned the boy.

A faint color came under her skin. "I'm sorry for being stupid. I suppose you're hungry."

"As a hunter. But there's no call to trouble you. I'll be where I can get bread, and meat too, in forty minutes. Good-by, child."

"No," said Helen. "Please don't go. I'd like to give you some bread."

"Oh, all right," said the boy. "What frightened you? Did you think I was a scamp?"

"I wasn't frightened," said Helen.

"Don't tell me," mocked the boy. "You couldn't get a word out."

"I wasn't frightened."

"You thought I was a bad lot. You don't know I'm not one now."

Helen's eyes filled with tears. She turned away quickly. "I'll get you your bread," she said.

"You are a silly, aren't you?" said the boy as she disappeared.

Before long she came back with a half a loaf in one hand, and something in the other which she kept behind her back.

"Thanks," said the boy, taking the bit of loaf. "What else have you got there?"

"It's something better than bread," said Helen slowly.

"Well, let's have a look at it."

She took her hand from behind her, and offered him seven ears of wheat. They were heavy with grain, and bowed on their ripe stems.

"Is this what you call better than bread?" he asked.

"It is better."

"Oh, all right. I sha'n't eat it though—not all at once."

"No," said Helen, "keep it till you're hungry. The grains go quite a long way when you're hungry."

"I'll eat one a year," said the boy, "and then they'll go so far they'll outlast me my lifetime."

"Yes," said Helen, "but the bread will be gone in forty minutes. And then you'll be where you can get meat."

"You funny thing," said the boy, puzzled because she never smiled.

"Where can you get meat?" she asked.

"In a boat, fishing for rabbits."

But she took no notice of the rabbits. She said eagerly, "A boat? are you going in a boat?"

"Yes."

"Are you a sailor?"

"You've hit it."

"You've seen the sea! you've been on the sea!—sailors do that . . ."

"Oh, dear no," said the boy, "we sail three times round the duckpond and come home for tea."

Helen hung her head. The boy put his hand up to his mouth and watched her over it.

"Well," he said presently, "I must get along to Pagham." He stuck the little sheaf of wheat through the hole in his cap, and it bobbed like a ruddy-gold plume over his ear. Then he felt in his pocket and after some fumbling got hold of what he wanted and pulled it out. "Here you are, child," he said, "and thank you again."

He put his present into her hand and swung off whistling. He turned once to wave to her, and the corn in his cap nodded with its weight and his light gait. She stood gazing till he was out of sight, and then she looked at what he had given her. It was a shell.

She had heard of shells, of course, but she had never seen one. Yet she knew this was no English shell. It was as large as the top of a teacup, but more oval than round. Over its surface, like pearl, rippled waves of sea-green and sea-blue, under a luster that was like golden moonlight on the ocean. She could not define or trace the waves of color; they flowed in and out of each other with interchangeable movement. One half of the outer rim, which was transparently thin and curled like the fantastic edge of a surf wave, was

flecked with a faint play of rose and cream and silver, that melted imperceptibly into the moonlit sea. When she turned the shell over she found that she could not see its heart. The blue-green side of the shell curled under like a smooth billow, and then broke into a world of caves, and caves within caves, whose final secret she could not discover. But within and within the color grew deeper and deeper, bottomless blues and unfathomable greens, shot with such gleams of light as made her heart throb, for they were like the gleams that shoot through our dreams, the light that just eludes us when we wake.

She went into the mill, trembling from head to foot. She was not conscious of moving, but she found herself presently standing by the grinding stones, with sound rushing through her and white dust whirling round her. She gazed and gazed into the labyrinth of the shell as though she must see to its very core; but she could not. So she unfastened her blue gown and laid the shell against her young heart. It was for the first time of so many times that I know not whether when, twenty years later, she did it for the last time, they outnumbered the silver hairs among her black ones. And the silver by then were uncountable. Yet on the day when Helen began her lonely listening of heart and ears betwixt the seashell and the millstones of her dreams, there was not a silver thread in her black locks to vex you with. She was but seventeeen. Yet old enough to begin spinning the stuff of the spirit. . . .

"My boy!—

"Oh, how strange it was, your coming like that, so

suddenly. Before I opened the door I stood there guessing. . . . And how could I have guessed this? Did you guess too on the other side?"

"No, not much. I thought it might be a cross old woman. What did *you* guess?"

"Oh, such stupid things. Kings and knights and even women. And it was you!"

"And it was you!"

"Suppose I'd been a cross old woman?"

"Suppose I'd been a king?"

"And you were just my boy."

"And you—my sulky girl."

"Oh, I wasn't sulky. Oh, didn't you understand? How could I speak to you? I couldn't hear you, I couldn't see you, even!"

"Can you see me now?"

She was lying with her cheek against his heart, and she turned her face suddenly inwards, because she saw him bend his head, and the sweetness of his first kiss was going to be more than she could bear.

"Why don't you look up, you silly child? Why don't you look at me, dear?"

"How can I yet? Can I ever? It's so hard looking in a person's eyes. But I am looking at you, I *am*, though you can't see me."

"Then tell me what color my eyes are."

"They're gray-green, and your hair is dark red, a sort of chestnut but a little redder and rough over your forehead, and your nose is all over freckles and very very snub—"

He shook her a little in his arms, saying: "How rude you are to my nose. I wish you'd look up."

"No, not yet . . . presently. But you, did you look at me?"

"Didn't you see me look?"

"When?"

"As soon as you opened the door."

"What did you see?"

"The loveliest thing I'd ever seen."

"I'm not really—am I?"

"I used to dream about you at night on my watches. I made you up out of bits of the night—white moonlight, black clouds, and stars. Sometimes I would take the last cloud of sunset for your lips. And the wind, when it was gentle, for your voice. And the movements of the sea for your movements, and the rise and fall of it for your breathing, and the lap of it against the boat for your kisses. Oh, child, look up! . . ."

She looked up. . . .

"What's your name?"

"Helen."

"I can't hear you."

"Helen. Say it."

"I'm trying to."

"*I* can't hear *you*, now. And I want to hear your voice say my name. Oh, my boy, do say it, so that I can remember it when you're away."

"I can't say it, child. Why didn't you tell me your name?"

"What is yours?"

"I'm trying to tell you."

"Please—please!"

"I'm trying with all my might. Listen with all yours."

"I am listening. I can't hear anything. Yet I'm listening so hard that it hurts. I want to say your name over and over and over to myself when you're away. *Can't* you say it louder?"

"No, it's no good."

"Oh, why didn't you tell me, boy?"

"Oh, child, why didn't you tell me?"

"Is my bread sweet to you?"

"The sweetest I ever ate. I ate it slowly, and took each bit from your hand. I kept one crust."

"And my corn?"

"Oh, your corn! that is everlasting. You have sown your seed. I have eaten a grain, and it bore its harvest. One by one I shall eat them, and every grain will bear its full harvest. You have replenished the unknown earth with fields of golden corn, and set me walking there for ever."

"And you have thrown golden light upon strange waters, and set me floating there for ever. Oh, you on my earth and I on your ocean, how shall we meet?"

"Your corn is my waters, my waters are your corn. They move on one wave. Oh, child, we are borne on it together, for ever."

"But how you teased me!"

"I couldn't help it."

"You and your boots and your duckponds."

"It was such fun. You were so serious. It was so easy to tease you."

"Why did you put your hand over your mouth?"

"To keep myself from—"

"Laughing at me?"

"Kissing you. You looked so sorry because sailors only sail round duckponds, when you thought they always sailed out by the West and home by the East. You believed the duckponds."

"I didn't really."

"For a moment!"

"I felt so stupid."

"You blushed."

"Oh, did I?"

"A very little. Like the inside of a shell. I'd always tease you to make you blush like that. Don't you ever smile or laugh, child?"

"You might teach me to. I haven't had the sort of life that makes one smile and laugh. Oh, but I could. I could smile and laugh for you if you wished. I could do anything you wanted. I could be anything you wanted."

"Shall I make something of you? What shall it be?"

"I don't care, so long as it is yours. Oh, make something of me. I've been lonely always. I don't want to be any more. I want to be able to come to you when I please, not only because I need so much to come, but because you need me to come. Can you make me sure that you need me? When no one has ever needed you, how can you believe . . . ? Oh, no, no! don't look sorry. I do believe it. And will you always stand with me here in the loneliness that has been so dark? Then it won't be dark any more. Why do two people make light? One alone only wanders and holds out her hand and finds no one—nothing. Sometimes not even herself. Will you be with me always?"

"Always."

"Why?"

"Because I love you."

"No," said Helen, "but because I love you."

"Tell me—*were* you frightened?"

"Of you? when I saw you at the door?"

"Yes. Were you?"

"Oh, my boy."

"But didn't you think I might be a scamp?"

"I didn't think about it at all. It wouldn't have made any difference."

"Then why were you as mum as a fish?"

"Oh, my boy."

"Why? why? why?—if you weren't frightened. Of course you were frightened."

"No, no, I wasn't. I told you I wasn't. Why don't you believe me?—Oh, you're laughing at me again."

"You're blushing again."

"It's so easy to make me ashamed when I've been silly. Of course you know now why I couldn't speak. You know what took my words away. Didn't you know then?"

"How could I know? How could I dream it would be as quick for you as for me?"

"One can dream anything . . . oh!"

"What is it, child?" For she had caught at her heart.

"Dreams . . . and not truth. Oh, are you here? Am I? Where are you—where are you? Hold me, hold me fast. Don't let it be just empty dreams."

"Hush, hush, my dear. Dreams aren't empty. Dreams

are as near the truth as we can come. What greater truth can you ever have than this? For as men and women dream, they drop one by one the veils between them and the mystery. But when they meet they are shrouded in the veils again, and though they long to strip them off, they cannot. And each sees of each but dimly the truth which in their dreams was as clear as light. Oh, child, it's not our dreams that are our illusions."

"No," she whispered. "But still it is not enough. Not quite enough for the beloved that they shall dream apart and find their truths apart. In life too they must touch, and find the mystery together. Though it be only for one eternal instant. Touch me not only in my dreams, but in life. Turn life itself into the dream at last. Oh, hold me fast, my boy, my boy . . ."

"Hush, hush, child, I'm holding you . . ."

"You wept."

"Oh, did you see? I turned my head away."

"Why did you weep?"

"Because you thought I had misjudged you."

"Then I misjudged you."

"But I did not weep for that."

"Would you, if I misjudged you?"

"It would not be so hard to bear."

"And you went away with tears and brought me the corn of your mill."

"And you took it with smiles, and gave me the shell of your seas."

"Your corn rustles through my head."

"Your shell whispers at my heart."

"You shall always hear it whispering there. It will tell you what I can never tell you, or only tell you in other ways."

"Of your life on the sea? Of the countries over the water? Of storms and islands and flashing birds, and strange bright flowers? Of all the lands and life I've never seen, and dream of all wrong? Will it tell me those things?—of your life that I don't know?"

"Yes, perhaps. But I could tell you of that life."

"Of what other life will it tell me?"

"Of my life that you do know."

"Is there one?"

"Look in your own heart."

"I am looking."

"And listen."

"Yes."

"What do you hear?"

"Oh, boy, the whispering of your shell!"

"Oh, child, the rustling of your corn!"

Oh, maids! the grinding of the millstones.

This is only a little part of what she heard. But if I told you the whole we should rise from the story gray-headed. For every day she carried her boy's shell to the grinding stones, and stood there while it spoke against her heart. And at other times of the day it lay in her pocket, while she swept and cooked and spun, and she saw shadows of her mill-dreams in the cobwebs and the rising steam, and heard echoes of them in her singing kettle and her singing wheel. And at night it lay on her pillow against her ear, and the voice of the waters went through her sleep.

So the years slipped one by one, and she grew from a girl into a young woman; and presently passed out of her youth. But her eyes and her heart were still those of a girl, for life had touched them with nothing but a girl's dream. And it is not time that leaves its traces on the spirit, whatever it may do to the body. Her father meanwhile grew harder and more tyrannical with years. There was little for him to fear now that any man would come to take her from him; but the habit of the oppressor was on him, and of the oppressed on her. And when this has been many years established, it is hard for either to realize that, to escape, the oppressed has only to open the door and go.

Yet Helen, if she had ever thought of escape into another world and life, would not have desired it. For in leaving her millstones she would have lost a world whose boundaries she had never touched, and a life whose sweetness she had never exhausted. And she would have lost her clew to knowledge of him who was to her always the boy in the old jersey who had knocked at her door so many years ago.

Once he was shipwrecked . . .

. . . The waters had sucked her under twice already, when her helpless hands hit against some floating substance on the waves. She could not have grasped it by herself, for her strength was gone; but a hand gripped her in the darkness, and dragged her, almost insensible, to safety. For a long while she lay inert across the knees of her rescuer. Consciousness was at its very boundary. She knew that in some dim distance strong hands were chafing a wet and frozen body . . . but whose hands?

. . . whose body? . . . Presently it was lifted to the shelter of strong arms; and now she was conscious of her own heart-beats, but it was like a heart beating in air, not in a body. Then warmth and breath began to fall like garments about this bodiless heart, and they were indeed not her own warmth and breath, but these things given to her by another—the warmth was that of his own body where he had laid her cold hands and breast to take what heat there was in him, and the breath was of his own lungs, putting life into hers through their two mouths. . . . She opened her eyes. It was dark. The darkness she had come out of was bright beside this pitchy night, and her struggle back to life less painful than the fierce labor of the wind and waves. Their frail precarious craft was in ceaseless peril. His left arm held her like a vice, but for greater safety he had bound a rope round their two bodies and the small mast of their craft. With his right arm he clasped the mast low down, and his right hand came round to grip her shaking knees. In this close hold she lay a long while without speaking. Then she said faintly:

"Is it my boy?"

"Yes, child. Didn't you know?"

"I wanted to hear you say it. How long have you been in danger?"

"I don't know. Some hours. I thought you would never come to yourself."

"I tried to come to you. I can't swim."

"The sea brought you to me. You were nearly drowned. You slipped me once. If you had again—!"

"What would you have done?"

"Jumped in. I couldn't have stayed on here without you."

"Ah, but you mustn't ever do that—promise, promise! For then you'd lose me for ever. Promise."

"I promise. But there's no fear for ever of that sort. There's no losing each other, whatever happens. You know that, don't you?"

"Yes, I do know. When people love, they find each other for ever. But I don't want you to die, and I don't want to die—yet. But if it is tonight, it will be together. Will it be tonight, do you think?"

"I don't know, dear. The storm's breaking up over there, but that's not the only danger."

"But nothing matters, nothing matters at all while I'm with you." She lay heavily against him; her eyes closed, and she shook violently.

"Child, you're shuddering, you're as cold as ice." He put his hand upon her chilly bosom, and hugged her more fiercely to his own. With a sudden movement of despair and anger at the little he could do, he slipped his arms from his jacket, and stripping open his shirt pulled her to him, re-fastening his jacket around them both, tying it tightly about their bodies by the empty sleeves. She felt his lips on her hair and heard him whisper, "You're not frightened of me, are you, child? You never will be, will you?"

She shook her head and whispered, "I never have been."

"Sleep, if you can, dear."

"I'll try."

So closely was she held by his coat and his arms, so

near she lay to his beloved heart, that she knew no longer what part of that union was herself; they were one body, and one spirit. Her shivering grew less, and with her lips pressed to his neck she fell asleep.

It was noon.

The hemisphere of the sky was an unbroken blue washed with a silver glare. She could not look up. The sea was no longer wild, but it was not smooth; it was a dancing sea, and every small wave rippled with crested rainbows. A flight of gulls wheeled and screamed over their heads; their movements were so swift that the mid-air seemed to be filled with visible lines described by their flight, silver lines that gleamed and melted on transparent space like curved lightnings.

"Oh, look! oh, look!" cried Helen.

He smiled, but he was not watching the gulls. "Yes, you've never seen that, have you, child?" His eyes searched the distance.

"But you aren't looking. What are you looking at?"

"Nothing. I can't see what I'm looking for. But the gulls might mean land, or icebergs, or a ship."

"I don't want land or a ship, or even icebergs," said Helen suddenly.

He looked at her with the fleeting look that had been her first impression of him.

"Why not? Why don't you?"

"I'm so happy where I am."

"That's all very well," said her boy, with his eyes on the distance.

For a while she lay enjoying the warmth of the sun, watching the gulls sliding down the unseen slopes of

the air. Presently high up she saw one hover and pause, settling on nothingness by the swift, almost imperceptible beat of its wings. And suddenly it dropped like a stone upon a wave, and darted up again so quickly that she could not follow what had happened.

"What is it doing?" she asked.

"Fishing," said the boy. "It wanted its dinner."

"So do I," said Helen.

He put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a packet wrapped in oilskin. There was biscuit in it. He gave some to her, bit by bit; though it was soft and dull, she was glad of it. But soon she drew away from the hand that fed her.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"You must have some too."

"That's all right. I'm not greedy like you birds."

"I'm not a bird. And I'm not greedy. Being hungry's not being greedy. I'd be greedy if I ate while you're hungry."

"I'm not hungry."

"Then neither am I."

To satisfy her he ate a biscuit. Soon after she began to feel thirst, but she dared not ask for water. She knew he had none. He looked at her lying pale in his arms, and said with a smile that was not like a real smile, "It's a pity about the icebergs." She smiled and nodded, and lay still in the heat, watching the gulls, and thinking of ice. Some of the birds settled on the raft. One sat on the mast; another hovered at her knee, picking at crumbs. They played in the sun, rising and falling, and turned in her vision into a whirl of snowflakes, enormous snowflakes. . . . She began to dream

of snow, and her lips parted in the hope that some might fall upon her tongue. Presently she ceased to dream of snow. . . . The boy looked down at her closed lids, and at her cheeks, as white as the breasts of the gulls. He could not bear to look long, and returned to his distances.

It was night again.

The circle of the sea was as smooth as silk. Pale light played over it like dreams and ghosts. The sky was a crowded arc of stars, millions of stars, she had never seen or imagined so many. They glittered, glittered restlessly, in an ecstasy that caught her spirit. She too was filled with millions of stars, through her senses they flashed and glittered—a delirium of stars in heaven and her heart. . . .

"My boy!"

"Yes, child."

"Do you see the stars?"

"Yes, child."

"Do you feel them?"

"Yes."

"Oh, can't we die now?"

She felt him move stiffly. "There's a ship! I'm certain of it now—I'm certain! Oh, if it were day!"

The stars went on dazzling. She did not understand about the ship. Time moved forward, or stood still. For her the night was timeless. It was eternity.

But things were happening outside in time and space. By what means they had been seen or had attracted attention, she did not know. But the floating dreamlight and the shivering starlight on the sea were broken by a dark movement on the waveless waters. A boat was

coming. For some time there had been shouting and calling in strange voices, one of them her boy's. But once again she hovered on the dim verge of consciousness. She had flown from the body he was painfully unbinding from his own. What he had suffered in holding it there so long she never knew. From leagues away she heard him whispering, "Child, can you help yourself a little?" And now for an instant her soul re-approached her body, and looked at him through the soft midnight of her eyes, and he saw in them such starlight as never was in sky or on sea.

"Kiss me," said Helen.

He kissed her.

With a great effort she lifted herself and stood upright on the raft, swaying a little and holding by the mast. The boat was still a little distant.

"Good-by, my boy."

"Child—!"

"Don't jump. You promised not to. You promised. But I can't come with you now. You must let me go."

He looked at her, and saw she was in a fever. He made a desperate clutch at her blue gown. But he was not quick enough. "Keep your promise!" she cried, and disappeared in the dreamlit waters; she disappeared like a dream, without a sound. As she sank, she heard him calling her by the only name he knew. . . .

When she was thirty-five her father died. Now she was free to go where she pleased. But she did not go anywhere.

Ever since, as a child, she had first tasted salt water, she had longed to travel and see other lands. What held

her now? Was it that her longing had been satisfied? that she had a host of memories of great mountains and golden shores, of jungles and strange cities of the coast, of islands lost in seas of sapphire and emerald? of caravans and towers of ivory? of haunted caverns and deserted temples? where, a child always, with her darling boy, she had had such adventures as would have filled a hundred earthly lives. They had built huts in uninhabited places, or made a twisted bower of strong green creepers, and lived their primitive paradisal life wanting nothing but each other; sometimes, through accidents and illness, they had nursed each other, with such unwearied tenderness that death himself had to withdraw, defeated by love. Once on a ship there had been mutiny, and she alone stood by him against a throng; once savages had captured her, and he, outwitting them, had rescued her, riding through leagues of prairie-land and forest, holding her before him on the saddle. In nearly all these adventures it was as though they had met for the first time, and were struck anew with the dumb wonder of first love, and the strange shy sweetness of wooing and confession. Yet they were but playing above truth. For the knowledge was always between them that they were bound immortally by a love which, having no end, seemed also to have had no beginning. They quarreled sometimes —this was playing too. She put, now herself, now him, in the wrong. And either reconciliation was sweet. But it was she who was oftenest at fault, his forgiveness was so dear to her. And still, this was but playing at it. When all these adventures and pretenses were done,

they stood heart to heart, and out of their only meeting in life built up eternal truth and told each other. They told it inexhaustibly.

And so, when her father left her free to go, Helen lived on still in the mill of dreams, and kept her millstones grinding. Two years went by. And her hard gray lonely life laid its hand on her hair and her countenance. Her father had worn her out before her time.

It was only invisible grain in the mill now. The peasants came no longer with their corn. She had enough to live on, and her long seclusion unfitted her for strange men in the mill, and people she must talk to. And so long was the habit of the recluse on her, that though her soul flew leagues her body never wandered more than a few hundred yards from her home. Some who had heard of her, and had glimpses of her, spoke to her when they met; but they could make no headway with this sweet, shy, silent woman. Yet children and boys and girls felt drawn to her. It was the dream in her eyes that stirred the love in their hearts; though they knew it no more than the soup in the pipkin knows why it bubbles and boils. For it cannot see the fire. But to them she did not seem old; her strength and eagerness were still upon her, and that silver needlework with which time broiders all men had in her its special beauty, setting her aloof in the unabandoned dream which the young so often desert as their youth deserts them. Those of her age, seeing that unyouthful gleam of her hair combined with the still-youthful dream of her eyes, felt as though they could not touch her; for no man can break another's web, he can only break his

own, and these had torn their films to tatters long ago, and shouldered their way through the smudgy rents, and no more walked where she walked. But very young people knew the places she walked in, and saw her clearly, for they walked there too, though they were growing up and she was growing old.

At the end of the second year there was a storm. It lasted three days without stopping. Such fury of rain and thunder she had never heard. The gaunt rooms of the mill were steeped in gloom, except when lightning stared through the flat windows or split into fierce cracks on the dingy glass. Those three days she spent by candle-light. Outside the world seemed to lie under a dark doom.

On the third morning she woke early. She had had restless nights, but now and then slept heavily; and out of one dull slumber she awakened to the certainty that something strange had happened. The storm had lulled at last. Through her window, set high in the wall, she could see the dead light of a blank gray dawn. She had seen other eyeless mornings on her windowpane; but this was different, the air in her room was different. Something unknown had been taken from or added to it. As she lay there wondering, but not yet willing to discover, the flat light at the window was blocked out. A seagull beat against it with its wings and settled on the sill.

The flutter and the settling of the bird overcame her. It was as though reality were more than she could bear. The birds of memory and pain flew through her heart.

She got up and went to the window. The gull did

not move. It was broken and exhausted by the storm. And beyond it she looked down upon the sea.

Yes, it was true. The sea itself washed at the walls of the mill.

She did not understand these gray-green waters. She knew them in vision, but not in reality. She cried out sharply and threw the window up. The draggled bird fluttered in and sank on the floor. A sea-wind blew in with it. The bird's wings shivered on her feet, and the wind on her bosom. She stared over the land, swallowed up in the sea. Wreckage of all sorts tossed and floated on it. Fences and broken gates and branches of trees; and fragments of boats and nets and bits of cork; and grass and flowers and seaweed—She thought —what did she think? She thought she must be dreaming.

She felt like one drowning. Where could she find a shore?

She hurried to the bed and got her shell; its touch on her heart was her first safety. In her nightgown as she was she ran with her naked feet through the dim passages until she stood beside the grinding stones. . . .

"Child! child! child!"

"Where are you, my boy, where are you?"

"Aren't you coming? Must I lose you after all this? —Oh, come!"

"But tell me where you are!"

"In a few hours I should have been with you—a few hours after many years."

"Oh, boy, for pity, tell me where to find you!"

"You are there waiting for me, aren't you, child? I know you are—I've always known you were. What would you have said to me when you opened the door in your blue gown?—"

"Oh, but say only where you are, my boy!"

"Do you know what I should have said? I shouldn't have said anything. I should have kissed you—"

"Oh, let me come to you and you shall kiss me. . . ."

But she listened in vain.

She went back to her room. The gull was still on the floor. Its wing was broken. Her actions from this moment were mechanical; she did what she did without will. First she bound the broken wing, and fetched bread and water for the wounded bird. Then she dressed herself and went out of the mill. She had a rope in her hands.

The water was not all around the mill. Strips and stretches of land were still unflooded, or only thinly covered. But the face of the earth had been altered by one of those great inland swoops of the sea that have for centuries changed and rechanged the point of Sussex, advancing, receding, shifting the coast-line, making new shores, restoring old fields, wedding the soil with the sand.

Helen walked where she could. She had no choice of ways. She kept by the edge of the water and went into no-man's land. A bank of rotting grasses and dry reeds, which the waves had left uncovered, rose from the marshes. She mounted it, and beheld the unnatural sea on either hand. Here and there in the desolate water mounds of gray-green grass lifted themselves like drifting islands. Trees stricken or still in leaf reared from the

unfamiliar element. Many of those which were leafless had put on a strange greenness, for their boughs dripped with seaweed. Over the floods, which were littered with such flotsam as she had seen from her window, flew sea-birds and land-birds, crying and cheeping. There was no other presence in that desolation except her own.

And then at last her commanded feet stood still, and her will came back to her. For she saw what she had come to find.

He was hanging, as though it had caught him in a snare, in a tree standing solitary in the middle of a wide waste of water. He was hanging there like a dead man. She could distinguish his dark red hair and his blue jersey.

She paused to think what to do. She couldn't swim. She would not have hesitated to try; but she wanted to save him. She looked about, and saw among the bits of stuff washing against the foot of the bank a large dismembered tree-trunk. It bobbed back and forth among the hollow reeds. She thought it would serve her if she had an oar. She went in search of one, and found a broken plank cast up among the tangled growth of the bank. When she had secured it she fastened one end of her rope around the stump of an old pollard squatting on the bank like a sturdy gnome, and the other end she knotted around herself. Then, gathering all the middle of the rope into a coil, and using her plank as a prop, she let herself down the bank and slid shuddering into the water. But she had her tree-trunk now; with some difficulty she scrambled on to it, and paddled her way into the open water.

It was not really a great distance to his tree, but to

her it seemed immeasurable. She was unskillful, and her awkwardness often put her into danger. But her will made her do what she otherwise might not have done; presently she was under the branches of his tree.

She pulled herself up to a limb beside him and looked at him. And it was not he.

It was not her boy. It was a man, middle-aged, rough and weatherbeaten, but pallid under his red-and-tan. His hair was grizzled. And his face was rough with a growth of grizzled hair. His whole body lurched heavily and helplessly in a fork of the tree, and one arm hung limp. His eyes were half-shut.

But they were not quite shut. He was not unconscious. And under the drooping lids he was watching her.

For a few minutes they sat gazing at each other in silence. She had her breath to get. She thought it would never come back.

The man spoke first.

"Well, you made a job of it," he said.

She didn't answer.

"But you don't know much about the water, do you?"

"I've never seen the sea till today," said Helen slowly.

He laughed a little. "I expect you've seen enough of it today. But where do you live, then, that you've never seen the sea? In the middle of the earth?"

"No," said Helen, "I live in a mill."

His eyelids flickered. "Do you? Yes, of course you do. I might have guessed it."

"How should you guess it?"

"By your blue dress," said the man. Then he fainted.

She sat there miserably, waiting, ready to prop him if he fell. She did not know what else to do. Before very long he opened his eyes.

"Did I go off again?" he asked.

She nodded.

"Yes. Well, it's time to be making a move. I dare say I can now you're here. What's your name?"

"Helen."

"Well, Helen, we'd better put that rope to some use. Will that tree at the other end hold?"

"Yes."

"Then just you untie yourself and we'll get aboard and haul ourselves home."

She unfastened the rope from her body, and helped him down to her makeshift boat.

"You take the paddle," he said. "My arm's damaged. But I can pull on the rope with the other."

"Are you sure? Are you all right? What's your name?"

"Yes, I can manage. My name's Peter. This would have been a lark thirty years ago, wouldn't it? It's rather a lark now."

She nodded vaguely, wondering what she would do if he fell off the log in mid-water.

"Suppose you faint again?"

"Don't look for trouble," said the man. "Push off, now."

Pulling and paddling they got to the bank. He took her helping-hand up it, and she saw by his movements that he was very feeble. He leaned on her as they went back up to the mill; they walked without speaking.

When they reached the door Peter said, "It's twenty

years since I was here, but I expect you don't remember."

"Oh, yes," said Helen, "I remember."

"Do you know?" said Peter. "It's funny you should remember."

And with that he did faint again. And this time when he recovered he was in a fever. His staying-power was gone.

She put him to bed and nursed him. She sat day and night in his room, doing by instinct what was right and needful. At first he lay either unconscious or delirious. She listened to his incoherent speech in a sort of agony, as though it might contain some clew to a riddle; and she sat with her passionate eyes brooding on his countenance, as though in that too might lie the answer. But if there was one, neither his words nor his face revealed it. "When he wakes," she whispered to herself, "he'll tell me. How can there be barriers between us any more?"

After three days he came to himself. She was sitting by the window preparing sheep's-wool for her spindle. She bent over her task, using the last of the light, which fell upon her head. She did not know that he was conscious, or had been watching her, until he spoke.

"Your hair used to be quite brown, didn't it?" he said. "Nut-brown."

She started and turned to him, and a faint flush stained her cheeks.

"Ah, you're not pleased," said Peter with a slight grin. "None of us like getting old, do we?"

Helen put by the question. "You're yourself again."

"Doing my best," said he. "How long is it?"

"Three days."

"As much as that? I could have sworn it was only yesterday. Well, time passes."

He said no more, and fell into a doze. Helen was as grateful for this as she could have been for anything just then. She couldn't have gone on talking. She was stunned with misgivings. How could he ever have thought her hair was brown? Couldn't he see even now that it had once been as black as jet? She put her hand up to her head, and unpinned a coil of her heavy hair, and spread it over her breast and looked at it. Yes, the silver was there, too much and too soon. But there was less silver than black. It was still time's stitchery, not his fabric. The man who was not her boy need never have seen her before to know that once her hair had been black. This was worse than forgetfulness in him; it was misremembrance. She pulled at the silver hairs passionately as though she would pluck them out and make him see her as she had been. But soon she stopped her futile effort to uncount the years. "I am foolish," she whispered to herself, and coiled her lock again and bound it in its place. "There are other ways of making him remember. Presently when he wakes again I will talk to him. I will remind him of everything, yes, and I'll tell him everything. I *won't* be afraid." She waited with longing his next consciousness.

But to her woe she found herself defeated. While he slept she was able, as when he had been delirious or absent, to create the occasion and the talk between them. She dropped all fears, and in frank tenderness brought him her twenty years of dreams. And in her thought he accepted and answered them. But when he

woke and spoke to her from the bed, she knew at once that the man who lay there was not the man with whom she had been speaking. His personality fenced with hers; it had barriers she could not pass. She dared not try, for dread of his indifference or his smiles.

"What made you stick on in this place?" he asked her.

"I don't know," said Helen. "Places hold one, don't they?"

"None ever held me. I couldn't have been content to stay the best half of my life in one spot. But I suppose women are different."

"You speak as though all women were the same."

"Aren't they? I thought they might be. I don't know much about them," said Peter, rubbing his chin. "Rough as a porcupine, aren't I? You must have thought me a savage when you found me stuck upside-down in that tree like a sloth. What *did* you think?"

She looked at him, longing to tell him what she had thought. She longed to tell him of the boy she had expected to find in the tree. She longed to tell him how the finding had shocked her by bringing home to her her loss—not of the boy, but of something in that moment still more precious to her. Because (she longed to tell him) she had so swiftly rediscovered the lost boy, not in his face but in his glance, not in his words but in the tones of his voice.

But when she looked at him and saw him leaning on his elbow waiting for her answer with his half-shut lids and the half-smile on his lips, she answered only, "I was thinking how to get you back to the bank."

"Was that it? Well, you managed it. I've never thanked you, have I?"

"Don't!" said Helen with a quick breath, and looked out of the window.

He waited for a few moments and then said, "I'm a bad hand at thanking. I can't help being a savage, you know. I'm not fit for women's company. I don't look so rough when I'm trimmed."

"I don't want to be thanked," said Helen controlling her voice; and added with a faint smile, "No one looks his best when he's ill."

"Wait till I'm well," grinned Peter, "and see if I'm not fit to walk you out o' Sundays." He lay back on his pillow and whistled a snatch of tune. Her heart almost stopped beating, because it was the tune he had whistled at the door twenty years ago. For a moment she thought she could speak to him as she wished. But desire choked her power to choose her words; so many rushed through her brain that she had to pause, seeking which of them to utter; and that long pause, in which she really seemed to have uttered them all aloud, checked the impulse. But surely he had heard her? No; for she had not spoken yet. And before she could make the effort he had stopped whistling, and when she looked at him to speak, he was fumbling restlessly about his pillow.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Something I had—where's my clothes?"

She brought them to him, and he searched them till he had found among them a small metal box which he thrust under the pillow; and then he lay back, as though too tired to notice her. So her impulse died in her, unacted on.

And during the next four days it was always so. A dozen times in their talks she tried to come near him,

and could not. Was it because he would not let her? or because the thing she wished to find in him was not really there? Sometimes by his manner only, and sometimes by his words, he baffled her when she attempted to approach him—and the attempt had been so painful to conceive, and its still-birth was such agony to her. He would talk frequently of the time when he would be making tracks again.

"Where to?" asked Helen.

"I leave it to chance. I always have. I've never made plans. Or very seldom. And I'm not often twice in the same place. You look tired. I'm sorry to be a bother to you. But it'll be for the last time, most likely. Go and lie down."

"I don't want to," said Helen under her breath. And in her thoughts she was crying, "The last time? Then it must be soon, soon! I'll make you listen to me *now!*"

"I want to sleep," said Peter.

She left the room. Tears of helplessness and misery filled her eyes. She was almost angry with him, but more angry with herself; but her self-anger was mixed with shame. She was ashamed that he made her feel so much, while he felt nothing. Did he feel nothing?

"It's my stupidity that keeps us apart," she whispered. "I will break through it!" As quickly as she had left him she returned, and stood by the bed. He was lying with his hand pressed over his eyes. When he was conscious of her being there, his hand fell, and his keen eyes shot into hers. His brows contracted.

"You nuisance," he muttered, and hid his eyes again. She turned and left him. When she got outside the door

she leaned against it and shook from head to foot. She hovered on the brink of her delusions and felt as though she would soon crash into a precipice. She longed for him to go before she fell. Yes, she began to long for the time when he should go, and end this pain, and leave her to the old strange life that had been so sweet. His living presence killed it.

After that third day she had had no more fears for his safety, and he was strong and rallied quickly. The gull too was saved. He saved it. It had drooped and sickened with her. She did not know what to do with it. On the fourth day as he was so much better, she brought it to him. He reset its wing and kept it by him, making it his patient and his playfellow. It thrived at once and grew tame to his hand. He fondled and talked to it like a lover. She would watch him silently with her smoldering eyes as he fed and caressed the bird, and jabbered to it in scraps of a dozen foreign tongues. His tenderness smote her heart.

"You're not very fond of birds," he said to her once, when she had been sitting in one of her silences while he played with his pet.

The words, question or statement, filled her with anger. She would not trust herself to protest or deny. "I don't know much about them," she said.

"That's a pity," said Peter coolly. "The more you know 'em the more you have to love 'em. Yet you could love them for all sorts of things without knowing them, I'd have thought."

She said nothing.

"For their beauty, now. That's worth loving. Look at this one—you're a beauty all right, aren't you, my

pretty? Not many girls to match you." He paused, and ran his finger down the bird's throat and breast. "Perhaps you don't think she's beautiful," he said to Helen.

"Yes, she's beautiful," said Helen, with a difficulty that sounded like reluctance.

"Ah, you don't think so. You ought to see her flying. You shall some day. When her hurt's mended she'll fly —I'll let her go."

"Perhaps she won't go," said Helen.

"Oh, yes, she will. How can she stop in a place like this? This is no air for her—she must fly in her own."

"You'll be sorry to see her go," said Helen.

"To see her free? No, not a bit. I want her to fly. Why should I keep her? I'd not let her keep me. I'd hate her for it. Why should I make her hate me?"

"Perhaps she wouldn't," said Helen, in a low voice.

"Oh, I expect she would. Ungrateful little beggar. I've saved her life, and she ought to know she belongs to me. So she might stay out of gratitude. But she'd come to hate me for it, all the same. Not at first; after a bit. Because we change. Bound to, aren't we?"

"Perhaps."

"I know I do. We can none of us stay what we were. You haven't either."

"You haven't much to go by," said Helen.

"Seven minutes at the door, wasn't it? This time it's been seven days."

"Yes."

"It's a long time for me," said Peter.

"It's not much out of a lifetime."

"No. But suppose it were more than seven days?"

SHE WOULD WATCH HIM SILENTLY WITH HER SMOLDERING EYES AS HE CARESSED THE BIRD

Helen looked at him and said slowly, "It will be, won't it? You won't be able to go tomorrow."

"No," said Peter, "not tomorrow, or next day perhaps. Perhaps I won't be able to go for the rest of my life."

This time Helen looked at him and said nothing.

Peter stroked his bird and whistled his tune and stopped abruptly and said, "Will you marry me, Helen?"

"I'd rather die," said Helen.

And she got up and went out of the room.

Well, then, my dear maids, when Helen ran out of his room she went to her own, and she threw herself on the bed and sobbed without weeping. Because everything in her life seemed to have been taken away from her. She lay there for a long time, and when she moved at last her head was so heavy that she took the pins from her hair to relieve herself of its weight. But still the pain weighed on her forehead, which burned on her cold fingers when she pressed them over her eyes, trying to think and find some gleam of hope among her despairing thoughts. And then she remembered that one thing at least was left her—her shell. During his illness she had never carried it to the millstones. It was as though his being there had been the only answer to her daily dreams, an answer that had failed them all the time. But now in spite of him she would try to find the old answers again. So she went once more to the millstones with her shell. And when she got there she held it so tightly to her heart that it marked her skin.

And the millstones had nothing to say. For the first time they refused to grind her corn.

Then Helen knew that she really had nothing left, and that the home-coming of the man had robbed her of her boy and of the child she had been. Nothing was left but the man and woman who had lost their youth. And the man had nothing to give the woman. Nothing but gratitude and disillusion. And now a still bitterer thought came to her—the thought that the boy had had nothing to give the girl. For twenty years it had been the girl's illusion. The storms in her heart broke out. She put her face in her hands and wept like wild rain on the sea. She wept so violently that between her passion and the speechless grinding of the stones she did not hear him coming. She only knew he was there when he put his arm round her.

"What is it, you silly thing?" said Peter.

She looked up at him through her hair that fell like a girl's in soft masses on either side of her face. There was a change in him, but she didn't know then what it was. He had got into his clothes and made himself kempt. His beard was no longer rough, though his hair was still unruly across his forehead, and under it his gray-green eyes looked, half-anxious, half-smiling, into hers. His face was rather pale, and he was a little unsteady in his weakness. But the look in his eyes was the only thing she saw. It unlocked her speech at last.

"Oh, why did you come back?" she cried. "Why did you come back? If you had never come I should have kept my dream to the end of my life. But now even when you go I shall never get it again. You have destroyed what was not there."

He was silent for a moment, still keeping his arm round her. Then he said, "Look what's here." And he opened his hand and showed her his metal box without its lid; in it were the mummies of seven ears of corn. Some were only husks, but some had grain in them still.

She stared at them through her tears, and drew from her breast her hand with the shell in it. Suddenly her mouth quivered and she cried passionately, "What's the use?" And she snatched the old corn from him and flung it to the millstones with her shell. And the millstones ground them to eternal atoms. . . .

"My boy! my boy! it was you over there in the tree!"

"Oh, child, you came at last in your blue gown!"

"Why didn't you call to me?"

"I'd no breath. I was spent. And I knew you'd seen me and would do your best."

"I'll never forget that sight of you in the tree, with your old jersey and your hair as red as ever."

"I shall always see your free young figure standing on the high bank against the sky."

"Oh, I was desperate."

"I wondered what you'd do. I knew you'd do something."

"I thought I'd never get across the water."

"Do you know what I thought as I saw you coming so bravely and so badly? I thought, I'll teach her to swim one day. Shall I, child?"

"I can't swim without you, my boy," she whispered.

"But you pretended not to know me!"

"I couldn't help it, it was such fun."

"How *could* you make fun of me then?"

"I always shall, you know."

"Oh, yes," she said, "do, always."

"What *did* you think when you saw me in the tree? What did you see when you got there? Not what you expected."

"No. I saw twenty years come flying upon me, twenty years I'd forgotten all about. Because for me it has always been twenty years ago."

"And you expected to see a boy, and you saw a grizzled man."

"No," said Helen, her eyes shining with tears, "I expected to see a boy, and I saw a gray-haired woman. I've seen her ever since."

"I've only seen her once," said Peter. "I saw her rise up from the water and sit in my tree. And when she spoke and looked at me, it was a child." He put his hand over her wet eyes. "You must stop seeing her, child," he said.

"When I told you my name, were you disappointed?"

"No. It's the loveliest name in the world."

"You said it at once."

"I had to. I'd wanted to say it for twenty years. But I sha'n't say it often, Helen."

"Won't you?"

"No, child."

"Now and then, for a treat?" she looked up at him half-shy, half-merry.

"Oh, you *can* smile, can you?"

"You were to teach me that too."

"Yes, I've a lot to teach you, haven't I?—I've yet to teach you to say my name."

"Have you?"

"You've never said it once."

"I've said it a thousand times."

"You've never let me hear you."

"Haven't I?"

"Let me hear you!"

"Peter."

"Say it again!"

"Peter! Peter! Peter!"

"Again!"

"My boy!" . . .

"When we got back to the mill-door the last of the twenty years, that had been melting faster and faster, melted away for ever. And you and I were standing there as we'd stood then; and I wanted to kiss your mouth as I'd wanted to then."

"Oh, why didn't you?—both times!"

"Shall I now, for both times?"

"Oh!—oh, that's for a hundred times."

"Think of all the times I've wanted to, and been without you."

"You've never been without me."

"I know that. How often I came to the mill."

"Did you come to the mill?"

"As often as I ate your grain. Didn't you know?"

"I know how often your sea brought me to you."

"Did it?"

"And, oh, my boy! at last the sea brought you to me."

"And the mill," he said. "Where has that brought us?"

"I thought perhaps you'd die."

"I couldn't have died so close on finding you. I was fighting the demons all the time—fighting my way through to you. And at last I opened my eyes and saw you again, your black hair edged with light against the window."

"My black hair? you mean my brown hair, don't you?"

"Oh, weren't you cross! I loved you for being cross."

"I wasn't cross. Why will you keep on saying I'm things I'm not?"

"You were so cross that you pretended our twenty years were sixty."

"I never said anything about twenty years, *or* sixty."

"You did, though. Sixty! why, in sixty years we'd have been very nearly old. So to punish you I pretended to go to sleep, and I saw you take your hair down. It was so beautiful. You've seen the threads spiders spin on blackened furze that gypsies have set fire to? Your hair was like that. You were angry with those lovely lines of silver, and you wanted to get rid of them. I nearly called to you to stop hurting what I loved so much, but you stopped of yourself, as though you had heard me before I called."

"I was ashamed of myself," whispered Helen. "I was ashamed of trying to be again what I was the only other time you saw me."

"You've never stopped being that, child," said Peter.

"You knew, didn't you, why it was I had stayed on at

the mill? You knew what it was that held me, and why I could never leave it?"

"Yes, I knew. It held you because it held me too. I wondered if you'd tell me that."

"I longed to, but I couldn't. I've never been able to tell you things. And I never shall."

"Oh, child, don't look so troubled. You've always told me things and always will. Do you think it's with our tongues we tell each other things? What can words ever tell? They only circle round the truth like birds flying in the sun. The light bathes their flight, yet they are millions of miles away from the light they fly in. We listen to each other's words, but we watch each other's eyes."

"Some people half-shut their eyes, Peter."

"Some people, Helen, can't shut their eyes at all. Your eyes will never stop telling me things. And the strangest thing about them is that looking into them is like being able to see in the dark. They are darkness, not light. And in darkness dreams are born. When I look into your eyes I go into your dream."

"I shall never shut my eyes again," she whispered. "I will keep you in my dream for ever."

"Women aren't all the same, Peter."

"Aren't they?"

"And yet—they are."

"Well, I give it up."

"Didn't you know?"

"No. I told you the truth that time. I've not had very much to do with women."

"Then I've something to teach you, Peter."

"I don't know what you can prove," said Peter. "One woman by herself can't prove a difference."

"Can't she?" said Helen; and laughed and cried at once.

"But why did you call me a nuisance?"

"You were one—you are one. You leave a man no peace—you're like the sea. You're full of storms, aren't you?"

"Not only storms."

"I know. But the sea wouldn't be the sea without her storms. They're one of her ways of holding us, too. And there are more storms in her than ever break. I see them in you, big ones and little ones, brooding. Then you're a—nuisance. You always will be, won't you?"

"Not to wreck you."

"You won't do that. Or if you do—I can survive shipwreck."

"I know."

"How do you know? I nearly gave up once, but the thought of you stopped me. I wanted to come back—I'd always meant to. So I held on."

"I know."

"How do you know? I never told you, did I?"

"Oh, Peter, the things we have to tell each other. The times you thought you were alone—the times I thought I was! You've had a life you never dreamed of—and I another life that was not in my dreams."

"You've saved me from death more than once," said Peter.

"You've done more than that," said Helen, "you've given me the only life I've had. But a thing doesn't be-

long to you because you've saved its life or given it life. It only belongs to you because you love it. I know you belong to me. But you only know if I belong to you."

"That's not true now. You do know. And I know."

"Yes; and we know that as that belonging has nothing to do with death, it can't have anything either to do with the saving or even the giving of life. So you must never thank me, or I you. There are no thanks in love. And that was why I couldn't bear your asking me to marry you today. I thought you were thanking me."

"When you played with the seagull . . ."

"Yes?"

"How you loved it!"

"Yes."

"I looked to see how you felt when you loved a thing. I wanted so much to be the seagull in your hands."

"When I touched it I was touching you."

She put his hand to her breast and whispered, "I love birds."

He smiled. "I knew you loved them; and best free. All birds must fly in their own air."

"Yes," she said. "But their freedom only means their power to choose what air they'll fly in. And every choice is a cage too."

"I shall leave the door open, child."

"I shall never fly out," said Helen.

"You talked of going away."

"Yes. But not from you."

"Am I to go with you always, following chance and making no plans?"

"Will you? You are the only plan I ever made. Will you leave everything else but me to chance? Perhaps it will lead us all over the earth; and perhaps after all we shall not go very far. But I never could see ahead, except one thing."

"What was it?"

"The mill-door and you in your old blue gown. And for seven days I've stopped seeing that. I haven't it to steer by. Will you chance it?"

"Must you be playing with meanings even in dreams? Don't you know—don't you know that for a woman who loves, and is not sure that she is loved, her days and nights are all chances, every minute she lives is a chance? It might be . . . it might not be . . . oh, those ghosts of joy and pain! they are almost too much to bear. For the joy isn't pure joy, or the pain pure pain, and she cannot come to rest in either of them. Sometimes the joy is nearly as great as though she knew; yet at the instant she tries to take it, it looks at her with the eyes of doubt, and she trembles, and dare not take it yet. And sometimes the pain is all but the death she foresees; yet even as she submits to it, it lays upon her heart the finger of hope. And then she trembles again, because she need not take it yet. Those are her chances, Peter. But when she knows that her beloved is her lover, life may do what it will with her; but she is beyond its chances for ever."

"Your corn! you kept my corn!"

"Till it should bear. And your shell there—you've kept my shell."

"Till it should speak. And now—oh, see these things that have held our dreams for twenty years! The life is threshed from them for ever—they are only husks. They can hold our dreams no more. Oh, I can't go on dreaming by myself, I can't, it's no use. I thought my heart had learned to bear its dream alone, but the time comes when love in its beauty is too near to pain. There is more love than the single heart can bear. Good-by, my boy—good-by!"

"Helen! don't suffer so! oh, child, what are you doing?—"

"Letting my dear dreams go . . . it's no use, Peter . . ."

The millstones took them and crushed them.

She uttered a sharp cry. . . .

His arm tightened round her. "What is it, child?" she heard him say.

She looked at him bewildered, and saw that he too was dazed. She looked into the gray-green eyes of a boy of twenty. She said in a voice of wonder, "Oh, my boy!" as he felt her soft hair.

"Such a fuss about an empty shell and a bit of dead wheat."

She hid her face on his jersey.

"You are a silly, aren't you?" said Peter. "I wish you'd look up."

Helen looked up, and they kissed each other for the first time.

THE SNOWSTORM

by Alexander Poushkin

ALEXANDER POUSHKIN

ALTHOUGH Alexander Poushkin was born in Moscow and a member of the Russian nobility, the language he first spoke was French. And although his father seemed proud that his very small son could readily recite French poetry, Poushkin never felt that either his father or mother really loved him. It was his nurse, Arina Rodinovna, who cared for him, taught him Russian and told him the *Skazki,* famous Russian folk tales.

When, at twelve, he entered the Lyceum in the Great Palace, his friends there became for him his real family. He later always returned to their reunions, bringing lyrics commemorating each occasion. By no means popular with all thirty classmates, he chose for special friends those who enjoyed writing or composing music. His favorite study was literature, his chief interest starting school magazines. When he was fifteen, a poem of his published in a leading periodical received high praise, recognition partly due to his family's prominence, but also to his undoubted potential genius.

Graduating, he became attaché in the St. Petersburg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a gay member of noble society but one who understood and sympathized with all men and women. When he wrote his *Ode to Liberty,* he barely escaped banishment to Siberia. Ordered to Southern Russia instead, he found compensation in the beautiful Crimea about which he immediately began to write. It was there he wrote *The Prisoner of the Caucausus.*

From then until he was killed in a duel at thirty-eight, and although his greatness was recognized, his life was stormy. He was embroiled in plots, often in debt and hampered by the censorship. But he held to his writing—poetry, ballads, folk tales, novels in verse and prose, plays—works cherished today by all lovers of great literature. Quite interestingly, when he wrote the group of stories of which *The Snowstorm* is one, he published them as by Ivan Belkin. And although they are now admitted to be among the distinguished short stories of the world, they met with little success until, later, the critics knew them for *The Prose Tales of Alexander Poushkin.*

THE SNOWSTORM

By Alexander Poushkin

TOWARDS the end of the year 1811, a memorable period for us, the good Gavril Gavrilovitch R—— was living on his domain of Nenaradova. He was celebrated throughout the district for his hospitality and kindheartedness. The neighbors were constantly visiting him: some to eat and drink; some to play at five copeck "Boston" with his wife, Praskovia Petrovna; and some to look at their daughter, Maria Gavrilovna, a pale, slender girl of seventeen. She was considered a wealthy match, and many desired her for themselves or for their sons.

Maria Gavrilovna had been brought up on French novels, and consequently was in love. The object of her choice was a poor sub-lieutenant in the army, who was then on leave of absence in his village. It need scarcely be mentioned that the young man returned her passion with equal ardor, and that the parents of his beloved one, observing their mutual inclination, forbade their daughter to think of him, and received him worse than a discharged assessor.

Our lovers corresponded with one another and daily saw each other alone in the little pine wood or near the old chapel. There they exchanged vows of eternal love, lamented their cruel fate, and formed various plans. Corresponding and conversing in this way, they arrived quite naturally at the following conclusion:

If we cannot exist without each other, and the will of hard-hearted parents stands in the way of our happiness, why cannot we do without them?

Needless to mention that this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and that it was very congenial to the romantic imagination of Maria Gavrilovna.

The winter came and put a stop to their meetings, but their correspondence became all the more active. Vladimir Nikolaievitch in every letter implored her to get married secretly, to hide for some time, and then throw themselves at the feet of their parents, who would, without any doubt, be touched at last by the heroic constancy and unhappiness of the lovers, and would infallibly say to them: "Children, come to our arms!"

Maria Gavrilovna hesitated for a long time, and several plans for a flight were rejected. At last she consented: on the appointed day she was not to take supper, but was to retire to her room under the pretext of a headache. Her maid was in the plot; they were both to go into the garden by the back stairs, and behind the garden they would find ready a sledge, into which they were to get, and then drive straight to the church of Jadrino, a village above five versts from Nenaradova, where Vladimir would be waiting for them.

On the eve of the decisive day, Maria Gavrilovna did not sleep the whole night; she packed and tied up her linen and other articles of apparel, wrote a long letter to a sentimental young lady, a friend of hers, and another to her parents. She took leave of them in the most touching terms, urged the invincible strength of passion as an excuse for the step she was taking, and wound up

with the assurance that she should consider it the happiest moment of her life, when she should be allowed to throw herself at the feet of her dear parents.

After having sealed both letters with a Toula seal, upon which were engraved two flaming hearts with a suitable inscription, she threw herself upon her bed just before daybreak, and dozed off: but even then she was constantly being awakened by terrible dreams. First it seemed to her that at the very moment when she seated herself in the sledge, in order to go and get married, her father stopped her, dragged her over the snow with fearful rapidity, and threw her into a dark bottomless abyss, down which she fell headlong with an indescribable sinking of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale and bloodstained. With his dying breath he implored her in a piercing voice to make haste and marry him. . . . Other fantastic and senseless visions floated before her one after another. At last she arose, paler than usual, and with an unfeigned headache. Her father and mother observed her uneasiness; their tender solicitude and incessant inquiries: "What is the matter with you, Masha? Are you ill, Masha?" cut her to the heart. She tried to reassure them and to appear cheerful, but in vain.

The evening came. The thought, that this was the last day she would pass in the bosom of her family, weighed upon her heart. She was more dead than alive. In secret she took leave of everybody, of all the objects that surrounded her.

Supper was served; her heart began to beat violently. In a trembling voice she declared that she did not want

any supper, and then took leave of her father and mother. They kissed her and blessed her as usual, and she could hardly restrain herself from weeping.

On reaching her own room, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. Her maid urged her to be calm and to take courage. Everything was ready. In half an hour Masha would leave for ever her parents' house, her room, and her peaceful girlish life. . . .

Out in the courtyard the snow was falling heavily; the wind howled, the shutters shook and rattled, and everything seemed to her to portend misfortune.

Soon all was quiet in the house: every one was asleep. Masha wrapped herself in a shawl, put on a warm cloak, took her small box in her hand, and went down the back staircase. Her maid followed her with two bundles. They descended into the garden. The snowstorm had not subsided; the wind blew in their faces, as if trying to stop the young criminal. With difficulty they reached the end of the garden. In the road a sledge awaited them. The horses, half-frozen with the cold, would not keep still; Vladimir's coachman was walking up and down in front of them, trying to restrain their impatience. He helped the young lady and her maid into the sledge, placed the box and the bundles in the vehicle, seized the reins, and the horses dashed off.

Having intrusted the young lady to the care of fate and to the skill of Tereshka the coachman, we will return to our young lover.

Vladimir had spent the whole of the day in driving about. In the morning he paid a visit to the priest of Jadrino, and having come to an agreement with him after a great deal of difficulty, he then set out to seek

for witnesses among the neighboring landowners. The first to whom he presented himself, a retired cornet of about forty years of age, and whose name was Dravin, consented with pleasure. The adventure, he declared, reminded him of his young days and his pranks in the Hussars. He persuaded Vladimir to stay to dinner with him, and assured him that he would have no difficulty in finding the other two witnesses. And, indeed, immediately after dinner, appeared the surveyor Schmidt, with mustache and spurs, and the son of the captain of police, a lad of sixteen years of age, who had recently entered the Uhlans. They not only accepted Vladimir's proposal, but even vowed that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Vladimir embraced them with rapture, and returned home to get everything ready.

It had been dark for some time. He dispatched his faithful Tereshka to Nenaradova with his sledge and with detailed instructions, and ordered for himself the small sledge with one horse, and set out alone, without any coachman, for Jadrino, where Maria Gavrilovna ought to arrive in about a couple of hours. He knew the road well, and the journey would only occupy about twenty minutes altogether.

But scarcely had Vladimir issued from the paddock into the open field, when the wind rose and such a snowstorm came on that he could see nothing. In one minute the road was completely hidden; all surrounding objects disappeared in a thick yellow fog, through which fell the white flakes of snow; earth and sky became confounded. Vladimir found himself in the middle of the field, and tried in vain to find the road again. His horse went on at random, and at every moment kept either

stepping into a snowdrift or stumbling into a hole, so that the sledge was constantly being overturned. Vladimir endeavored not to lose the right direction. But it seemed to him that more than half an hour had already passed, and he had not yet reached the Jadrino wood. Another ten minutes elapsed—still no wood was to be seen. Vladimir drove across a field intersected by deep ditches. The snowstorm did not abate, the sky did not become any clearer. The horse began to grow tired, and the perspiration rolled from him in great drops, in spite of the fact that he was constantly being half-buried in the snow.

At last Vladimir perceived that he was going in the wrong direction. He stopped, began to think, to recollect, and compare, and he felt convinced that he ought to have turned to the right. He turned to the right now. His horse could scarcely move forward. He had now been on the road for more than an hour. Jadrino could not be far off. But on and on he went, and still no end to the field—nothing but snowdrifts and ditches. The sledge was constantly being overturned, and as constantly being set right again. The time was passing: Vladimir began to grow seriously uneasy.

At last something dark appeared in the distance. Vladimir directed his course towards it. On drawing near, he perceived that it was a wood.

"Thank Heaven!" he thought, "I am not far off now."

He drove along by the edge of the wood, hoping by-and-by to fall upon the well-known road or to pass round the wood: Jadrino was situated just behind it. He soon found the road, and plunged into the darkness

of the wood, now denuded of leaves by the winter. The wind could not rage here; the road was smooth; the horse recovered courage, and Vladimir felt reassured.

But he drove on and on, and Jadrino was not to be seen; there was no end to the wood. Vladimir discovered with horror that he had entered an unknown forest. Despair took possession of him. He whipped the horse; the poor animal broke into a trot, but it soon slackened its pace, and in about a quarter of an hour it was scarcely able to drag one leg after the other, in spite of all the exertions of the unfortunate Vladimir.

Gradually the trees began to get sparser, and Vladimir emerged from the forest; but Jadrino was not to be seen. It must now have been about midnight. Tears gushed from his eyes; he drove on at random. Meanwhile the storm had subsided, the clouds dispersed, and before him lay a level plain covered with a white undulating carpet. The night was tolerably clear. He saw, not far off, a little village, consisting of four or five houses. Vladimir drove towards it. At the first cottage he jumped out of the sledge, ran to the window and began to knock. After a few minutes, the wooden shutter was raised, and an old man thrust out his gray beard.

"What do you want?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Yes, yes! Is it far?"

"Not far; about ten versts."

At this reply, Vladimir grasped his hair and stood motionless, like a man condemned to death.

"Where do you come from?" continued the old man.

Vladimir had not the courage to answer the question.

"Listen, old man," said he: "can you procure me horses to take me to Jadrino?"

"How should we have such things as horses?" replied the peasant.

"Can I obtain a guide? I will pay him whatever he pleases."

"Wait," said the old man, closing the shutter; "I will send my son out to you; he will guide you."

Vladimir waited. But a minute had scarcely elapsed when he began knocking again. The shutter was raised, and the beard again appeared.

"What do you want?"

"What about your son?"

"He'll be out presently; he is putting on his boots. Are you cold? Come in and warm yourself."

"Thank you; send your son out quickly."

The door creaked: a lad came out with a cudgel and went on in front, at one time pointing out the road, at another searching for it among the drifted snow.

"What is the time?" Vladimir asked him.

"It will soon be daylight," replied the young peasant. Vladimir spoke not another word.

The cocks were crowing, and it was already light when they reached Jadrino. The church was closed. Vladimir paid the guide and drove into the priest's courtyard. His sledge was not there. What news awaited him! . . . .

But let us return to the worthy proprietors of Nenaradova, and see what is happening there.

Nothing.

The old people awoke and went into the parlor, Gavril Gavrilovitch in a night-cap and flannel doublet,

Praskovia Petrovna in a wadded dressing-gown. The tea-urn was brought in, and Gavril Gavrilovitch sent a servant to ask Maria Gavrilovna how she was and how she had passed the night. The servant returned, saying that the young lady had not slept very well, but that she felt better now, and that she would come down presently into the parlor. And indeed, the door opened and Maria Gavrilovna entered the room and wished her father and mother good morning.

"How is your head, Masha?" asked Gavril Gavrilovitch.

"Better, papa," replied Masha.

"Very likely you inhaled the fumes from the charcoal yesterday," said Praskovia Petrovna.

"Very likely, mamma," replied Masha.

The day passed happily enough, but in the night Masha was taken ill. A doctor was sent for from the town. He arrived in the evening and found the sick girl delirious. A violent fever ensued, and for two weeks the poor patient hovered on the brink of the grave.

Nobody in the house knew anything about her flight. The letters, written by her the evening before, had been burnt; and her maid, dreading the wrath of her master, had not whispered a word about it to anybody. The priest, the retired cornet, the mustached surveyor, and the little Uhlan were discreet, and not without reason. Tereshka, the coachman, never uttered one word too much about it, even when he was drunk. Thus the secret was kept by more than half-a-dozen conspirators.

But Maria Gavrilovna herself divulged her secret during her delirious ravings. But her words were so disconnected, that her mother, who never left her bedside,

could only understand from them that her daughter was deeply in love with Vladimir Nikolaievitch, and that probably love was the cause of her illness. She consulted her husband and some of her neighbors, and at last it was unanimously decided that such was evidently Maria Gavrilovna's fate, that a woman cannot ride away from the man who is destined to be her husband, that poverty is not a crime, that one does not marry wealth, but a man. Moral proverbs are wonderfully useful in those cases where we can invent little in our own justification.

In the meantime the young lady began to recover. Vladimir had not been seen for a long time in the house of Gavril Gavrilovitch. He was afraid of the usual reception. It was resolved to send and announce to him an unexpected piece of good news: the consent of Maria's parents to his marriage with their daughter. But what was the astonishment of the proprietor of Nenaradova, when, in reply to their invitation, they received from him a half-insane letter. He informed them that he would never set foot in their house again, and begged them to forget an unhappy creature whose only hope was in death. A few days afterwards they heard that Vladimir had joined the army again. This was in the year 1812.

For a long time they did not dare to announce this to Masha, who was now convalescent. She never mentioned the name of Vladimir. Some months afterwards, finding his name in the list of those who had distinguished themselves and been severely wounded at Borodino, she fainted away, and it was feared that she would have another attack of fever. But, Heaven be thanked! the fainting fit had no serious consequences.

Another misfortune fell upon her: Gavril Gavrilovitch died, leaving her the heiress to all his property. But the inheritance did not console her, she shared sincerely the grief of poor Praskovia Petrovna, vowing that she would never leave her. They both quitted Nenaradova, the scene of so many sad recollections, and went to live on another estate.

Suitors crowded round the young and wealthy heiress, but she gave not the slightest hope to any of them. Her mother sometimes exhorted her to make a choice; but Maria Gavrilovna shook her head and became pensive. Vladimir no longer existed: he had died in Moscow on the eve of the entry of the French. His memory seemed to be held sacred by Masha; at least she treasured up everything that could remind her of him: books that he had once read, his drawings, his notes, and verses of poetry that he had copied out for her. The neighbors, hearing of all this, were astonished at her constancy, and awaited with curiosity the hero who should at last triumph over the melancholy fidelity of this virgin Artemisia.

Meanwhile the war had ended gloriously. Our regiments returned from abroad, and the people went out to meet them. The bands played the conquering songs: "Vive Henri-Quatre," Tyrolese waltzes and airs from "Joconde." Officers, who had set out for the war almost mere lads, returned grown men, with martial air, and their breasts decorated with crosses. The soldiers chatted gayly among themselves, constantly mingling French and German words in their speech. Time never to be forgotten! Time of glory and enthusiasm! How throbbed the Russian heart at the word "Fatherland!" How sweet

were the tears of meeting! With what unanimity did we unite feelings of national pride with love for the Czar! And for him—what a moment!

The women, the Russian women, were then incomparable. Their usual coldness disappeared. Their enthusiasm was truly intoxicating, when welcoming the conquerors they cried "Hurrah!"

"And threw their caps high in the air!"

What officer of that time does not confess that to the Russian women he was indebted for his best and most precious reward?

At this brilliant period Maria Gavrilovna was living with her mother in the province of ——, and did not see how both capitals celebrated the return of the troops. But in the districts and villages the general enthusiasm was, if possible, even still greater. The appearance of an officer in those places was for him a veritable triumph, and the lover in a plain coat felt very ill at ease in his vicinity.

We have already said that, in spite of her coldness, Maria Gavrilovna was, as before, surrounded by suitors. But all had to retire into the background when the wounded Colonel Bourmin of the Hussars, with the Order of St. George in his buttonhole, and with an "interesting pallor," as the young ladies of the neighborhood observed, appeared at the castle. He was about twenty-six years of age. He had obtained leave of absence to visit his estate, which was contiguous to that of Maria Gavrilovna. Maria bestowed special attention upon him. In his presence her habitual pensiveness dis-

appeared. It cannot be said that she coquetted with him, but a poet, observing her behavior, would have said:

"Se amor non è, che dunque?"

Bourmin was indeed a very charming young man. He possessed that spirit which is eminently pleasing to women: a spirit of decorum and observation, without any pretensions, and yet not without a slight tendency towards careless satire. His behavior towards Maria Gavrilovna was simple and frank, but whatever she said or did, his soul and eyes followed her.

But more than everything else—more than his tenderness, more than his agreeable conversation, more than his interesting pallor, more than his arm in a sling, —the silence of the young Hussar excited her curiosity and imagination. She could not but confess that he pleased her very much; probably he, too, with his perception and experience, had already observed that she made a distinction between him and others; how was it then that she had not yet seen him at her feet or heard his declaration? What restrained him? Was it timidity, inseparable from true love, or pride, or the coquetry of a crafty wooer? It was an enigma to her. After long reflection, she came to the conclusion that timidity alone was the cause of it, and she resolved to encourage him by greater attention and, if circumstances should render it necessary, even by an exhibition of tenderness. She prepared a most unexpected dénouement, and waited with impatience for the moment of the romantic explanation. A secret, of whatever nature it may be, always presses heavily upon a girl's heart. Her stratagem had the desired success; at least Bourmin fell into such

a reverie, and his black eyes rested with such fire upon her, that the decisive moment seemed close at hand. The neighbors spoke about the marriage as if it were a matter already decided upon, and good Praskovia Petrovna rejoiced that her daughter had at last found a lover worthy of her.

On one occasion the old lady was sitting alone in the parlor, amusing herself with a pack of cards, when Bourmin entered the room and immediately inquired for Maria Gavrilovna.

"She is in the garden," replied the old lady: "go out to her, and I will wait here for you."

Bourmin went, and the old lady made the sign of the cross and thought: "Perhaps the business will be settled today!"

Bourmin found Maria Gavrilovna near the pond, under a willow-tree, with a book in her hands, and in a white dress: a veritable heroine of romance. After the first few questions and observations, Maria Gavrilovna purposely allowed the conversation to drop, thereby increasing their mutual embarrassment, from which there was no possible way of escape save by a sudden and decisive declaration.

And this is what happened: Bourmin, feeling the difficulty of his position, declared that he had long sought for an opportunity to open his heart to her, and requested a moment's attention. Maria Gavrilovna closed her book and cast down her eyes, as a sign of compliance with his request.

"I love you," said Bourmin: "I love you passionately. . . ."

Maria Gavrilovna blushed and lowered her head still more. "I have acted imprudently in accustoming my-

self to the sweet pleasure of seeing and hearing you daily. . . . ." Maria Gavrilovna recalled to mind the first letter of St. Preux. "But it is now too late to resist my fate; the remembrance of you, your dear incomparable image, will henceforth be the torment and the consolation of my life, but there still remains a grave duty for me to perform—to reveal to you a terrible secret which will place between us an insurmountable barrier. . . ."

"That barrier has always existed," interrupted Maria Gavrilovna hastily: "I could never be your wife."

"I know," replied he calmly: "I know that you once loved, but death and three years of mourning . . . Dear, kind Maria Gavrilovna, do not try to deprive me of my last consolation: the thought that you would have consented to make me happy, if—"

"Don't speak, for Heaven's sake, don't speak. You torture me."

"Yes, I know, I feel that you would have been mine, but—I am the most miserable creature under the sun—I am already married!"

Maria Gavrilovna looked at him in astonishment.

"I am already married," continued Bourmin: "I have been married four years, and I do not know who is my wife, or where she is, or whether I shall ever see her again!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "How very strange! Continue: I will relate to you afterwards . . . But continue, I beg of you."

"At the beginning of the year 1812," said Bourmin, "I was hastening to Vilna, where my regiment was stationed. Arriving late one evening at one of the post-stations, I ordered the horses to be got ready as quickly

as possible, when suddenly a terrible snowstorm came on, and the postmaster and drivers advised me to wait till it had passed over. I followed their advice, but an unaccountable uneasiness took possession of me: it seemed as if some one were pushing me forward. Meanwhile the snowstorm did not subside; I could endure it no longer, and again ordering out the horses, I started off in the midst of the storm. The driver conceived the idea of following the course of the river, which would shorten our journey by three versts. The banks were covered with snow: the driver drove past the place where we should have come out upon the road, and so we found ourselves in an unknown part of the country. . . . The storm did not cease; I saw a light in the distance, and I ordered the driver to proceed towards it. We reached a village; in the wooden church there was a light. The church was open. Outside the railings stood several sledges, and people were passing in and out through the porch.

" 'This way! this way!' cried several voices.

"I ordered the driver to proceed.

" 'In the name of Heaven, where have you been loitering?' said somebody to me. 'The bride has fainted away; the pope does not know what to do, and we were just getting ready to go back. Get out as quickly as you can.'

"I got out of the sledge without saying a word, and went into the church, which was feebly lit up by two or three tapers. A young girl was sitting on a bench in a dark corner of the church; another girl was rubbing her temples.

" 'Thank God!' said the latter, 'you have come at last. You have almost killed the young lady.'

"The old priest advanced towards me, and said:

" 'Do you wish me to begin?'

" 'Begin, begin, father,' replied I, absently.

"The young girl was raised up. She seemed to me not at all bad-looking. . . . Impelled by an incomprehensible, unpardonable levity, I placed myself by her side in front of the pulpit; the priest hurried on; three men and a chambermaid supported the bride and only occupied themselves with her. We were married.

" 'Kiss each other!' said the witnesses to us.

"My wife turned her pale face towards me. I was about to kiss her, when she exclaimed: 'Oh! it is not he! it is not he!' and fell senseless.

"The witnesses gazed at me in alarm. I turned round and left the church without the least hindrance, flung myself in the *kibitka* and cried: 'Drive off!'

"And you do not know what became of your poor wife?" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna.

"I do not know," replied Bourmin; "neither do I know the name of the village where I was married, nor the post-station where I set out from. At that time I attached so little importance to my wicked prank, that on leaving the church, I fell asleep, and did not awake till the next morning after reaching the third station. The servant who was then with me died during the campaign, so that I have no hope of ever discovering the woman upon whom I played such a cruel joke, and who is now so cruelly avenged."

"Then it was you!" cried Maria Gavrilovna, seizing him by the hand: "And you do not recognize me?"

Bourmin turned pale—and threw himself at her feet.

HER FIRST BALL

by Katharine Mansfield

KATHARINE MANSFIELD

KATHLEEN BEAUCHAMP, later known as Katharine Mansfield, was born in Wellington, New Zealand. Her childhood was spent in Karori where she attended village school and where, when she was nine, her first story was published and she received a prize for English composition.

Between her thirteenth and eighteenth years she was in England, a student in Queen's College. She edited the college magazine, but her chief interest was her violoncello and she planned to become a musician. Returning unwillingly to New Zealand, for two years she rebelled against what she then considered the narrow life there. And when her best friends left for London, she decided that she, too, must go.

Back in England, she made up her mind that literature, not music, was her work and she began submitting stories to editors. They did not encourage her. To support herself, she joined a traveling opera company. And from then until she died, life for Katharine Mansfield meant struggle. She was never strong. She was later incurably ill. For long the only magazines continuously interested in her were the small ones edited by John Middleton Murry, afterward her husband. Her *Journal* is the story of a sensitive, lovely person to whom life brought hardship.

Yet her courage did not fail. Nor did she falter in her high standards for writing. "I do not want to die without leaving a record of my belief that suffering can be overcome," she wrote in 1920. "For I do believe it. Accept it fully. Make it part of life." And, "It is only by being true to life that I can be true to art."

She especially liked to write of her New Zealand childhood when she and her brother, Chummie, who was killed in the war, were together. You will find these stories in *The Garden Party,* which includes *Her First Ball* and in *Bliss.*

Before she died, Katharine Mansfield was to know that lovers of beautiful stories in this country as well as in England had read her own with deepest appreciation.

HER FIRST BALL

By Katharine Mansfield

EXACTLY when the ball began Leila would have found it hard to say. Perhaps her first real partner was the cab. It did not matter that she shared the cab with the Sheridan girls and their brother. She sat back in her own little corner of it, and the bolster on which her hand rested felt like the sleeve of an unknown young man's dress suit; and away they bowled, past waltzing lamp-posts and houses and fences and trees.

"Have you really never been to a ball before, Leila? But, my child, how too weird—" cried the Sheridan girls.

"Our nearest neighbor was fifteen miles," said Leila softly, gently opening and shutting her fan.

Oh, dear, how hard it was to be indifferent like the others! She tried not to smile too much; she tried not to care. But every single thing was so new and exciting . . . Meg's tuberoses, Jose's long loop of amber, Laura's little dark head, pushing above her white fur like a flower through snow. She would remember for ever. It even gave her a pang to see her cousin Laurie throw away the wisps of tissue paper he pulled from the fastenings of his new gloves. She would like to have kept those wisps as a keepsake, as a remembrance. Laurie leaned forward and put his hand on Laura's knee.

"Look here, darling," he said. "The third and the ninth as usual. Twig?"

Oh, how marvelous to have a brother! In her excite-

ment Leila felt that if there had been time, if it hadn't been impossible, she couldn't have helped crying because she was an only child, and no brother had ever said "Twig?" to her; no sister would ever say, as Meg said to Jose that moment, "I've never known your hair go up more successfully than it has tonight!"

But, of course, there was no time. They were at the drill hall already; there were cabs in front of them and cabs behind. The road was bright on either side with moving fan-like lights, and on the pavement gay couples seemed to float through the air; little satin shoes chased each other like birds.

"Hold on to me, Leila; you'll get lost," said Laura.

"Come on, girls, let's make a dash for it," said Laurie.

Leila put two fingers on Laura's pink velvet cloak, and they were somehow lifted past the big golden lantern, carried along the passage, and pushed into the little room marked "Ladies." Here the crowd was so great there was hardly space to take off their things; the noise was deafening. Two benches on either side were stacked high with wraps. Two old women in white aprons ran up and down tossing fresh armfuls. And everybody was pressing forward trying to get at the little dressing-table and mirror at the far end.

A great quivering jet of gas lighted the ladies' room. It couldn't wait! it was dancing already. When the door opened again and there came a burst of tuning from the drill hall, it leaped almost to the ceiling.

Dark girls, fair girls were patting their hair, tying ribbons again, tucking handkerchiefs down the fronts of their bodices, smoothing marble-white gloves. And because they were all laughing it seemed to Leila that they were all lovely.

"Aren't there any invisible hairpins?" cried a voice. "How most extraordinary! I can't see a single invisible hairpin."

"Powder my back, there's a darling," cried some one else.

"But I must have a needle and cotton. I've torn simply miles and miles of the frill," wailed a third.

Then, "Pass them along, pass them along!" The straw basket of programs was tossed them from arm to arm. Darling little pink-and-silver programs, with pink pencils and fluffy tassels. Leila's fingers shook as she took one out of the basket. She wanted to ask some one, "Am I meant to have one too?" but she had just time to read: "Waltz 3. *Two, Two in a Canoe.* Polka 4. *Making the Feathers Fly,*" when Meg cried, "Ready, Leila?" and they pressed their way through the crush in the passage towards the big double doors of the drill hall.

Dancing had not begun yet, but the band had stopped tuning, and the noise was so great it seemed that when it did begin to play it would never be heard. Leila, pressing close to Meg, looking over Meg's shoulder, felt that even the little quivering colored flags strung across the ceiling were talking. She quite forgot to be shy; she forgot how in the middle of dressing she had sat down on the bed with one shoe off and one shoe on and begged her mother to ring up her cousins and say she couldn't go after all. And the rush of longing she had had to be sitting on the veranda of their forsaken upcountry home, listening to the baby owls crying "More pork" in the moonlight, was changed to a rush of joy so sweet that it was hard to bear alone. She clutched her fan, and, gazing at the gleaming, golden floor, the azaleas, the lanterns, the stage at one end with its red

carpet and gilt chairs and the band in a corner, she thought breathlessly, "How heavenly; how simply heavenly!"

All the girls stood grouped together at one side of the doors, the men at the other, and the chaperones in dark dresses, smiling rather foolishly, walked with little careful steps over the polished floor towards the stage.

"This is my little country cousin Leila. Be nice to her. Find her partners; she's under my wing," said Meg, going up to one girl after another.

Strange faces smiled at Leila—sweetly, vaguely. Strange voices answered, "Of course, my dear." But Leila felt the girls didn't really see her. They were looking towards the men. Why didn't the men begin? What were they waiting for? There they stood, smoothing their gloves, patting their glossy hair and smiling among themselves. Then, quite suddenly, as if they had only just made up their minds that that was what they had to do, the men came gliding over the parquet. There was a joyful flutter among the girls. A tall, fair man flew up to Meg, seized her program, scribbled something; Meg passed him on to Leila. "May I have the pleasure?" He ducked and smiled. There came a dark man wearing an eyeglass, then cousin Laurie with a friend, and Laura with a little freckled fellow whose tie was crooked. Then quite an old man—fat, with a big bald patch on his head —took her program and murmured, "Let me see, let me see!" And he was a long time comparing his program, which looked black with names, with hers. It seemed to give him so much trouble that Leila was ashamed. "Oh, please don't bother," she said eagerly. But instead of replying the fat man wrote something,

glanced at her again. "Do I remember this bright little face?" he said softly. "Is it known to me of yore?" At that moment the band began playing; the fat man disappeared. He was tossed away on a great wave of music that came flying over the gleaming floor, breaking the groups up into couples, scattering them, sending them spinning. . . .

Leila had learned to dance at boarding school. Every Saturday afternoon the boarders were hurried off to a little corrugated iron mission hall where Miss Eccles (of London) held her "select" classes. But the difference between that dusty-smelling hall—with calico texts on the walls, the poor terrified little woman in a brown velvet toque with rabbit's ears thumping the cold piano, Miss Eccles poking the girls' feet with her long white wand—and this was so tremendous that Leila was sure if her partner didn't come and she had to listen to that marvelous music and to watch the others sliding, gliding over the golden floor, she would die at least, or faint, or lift her arms and fly out of one of those dark windows that showed the stars.

"Ours, I think—" Some one bowed, smiled and offered her his arm; she hadn't to die after all. Some one's hand pressed her waist, and she floated away like a flower that is tossed into a pool.

"Quite a good floor, isn't it?" drawled a faint voice close to her ear.

"I think it's most beautifully slippery," said Leila.

"Pardon!" The faint voice sounded surprised. Leila said it again. And there was a tiny pause before the voice echoed, "Oh, quite!" and she was swung round again.

He steered so beautifully. That was the great difference between dancing with girls and men, Leila decided. Girls banged into each other, and stamped on each other's feet; the girl who was gentleman always clutched you so.

The azaleas were separate flowers no longer; they were pink and white flags streaming by.

"Were you at the Bells' last week?" the voice came again. It sounded tired. Leila wondered whether she ought to ask him if he would like to stop.

"No, this is my first dance," said she.

Her partner gave a little gasping laugh. "Oh, I say," he protested.

"Yes, it is really the first dance I've ever been to." Leila was most fervent. It was such a relief to be able to tell somebody. "You see, I've lived in the country all my life up until now. . . ."

At that moment the music stopped, and they went to sit on two chairs against the wall. Leila tucked her pink satin feet under and fanned herself, while she blissfully watched the other couples passing and disappearing through the swing doors.

"Enjoying yourself, Leila?" asked Jose, nodding her golden head.

Laura passed and gave her the faintest little wink; it made Leila wonder for a moment whether she was quite grown up after all. Certainly her partner did not say very much. He coughed, tucked his handkerchief away, pulled down his waistcoat, took a minute thread off his sleeve. But it didn't matter. Almost immediately the band started, and her second partner seemed to spring from the ceiling.

"Floor's not bad," said the new voice. Did one always begin with the floor? And then, "Were you at the Neaves' on Tuesday?" And again Leila explained. Perhaps it was a little strange that her partners were not more interested. For it was thrilling. Her first ball! She was only at the beginning of everything. It seemed to her that she had never known what the night was like before. Up till now it had been dark, silent, beautiful very often—oh, yes—but mournful somehow. Solemn. And now it would never be like that again—it had opened dazzling bright.

"Care for an ice?" said her partner. And they went through the swing doors, down the passage, to the supper room. Her cheeks burned, she was fearfully thirsty. How sweet the ices looked on little glass plates, and how cold the frosted spoon was, iced too! And when they came back to the hall there was the fat man waiting for her by the door. It gave her quite a shock again to see how old he was; he ought to have been on the stage with the fathers and mothers. And when Leila compared him with her other partners he looked shabby. His waistcoat was creased, there was a button off his glove, his coat looked as if it was dusty with French chalk.

"Come along, little lady," said the fat man. He scarcely troubled to clasp her, and they moved away so gently, it was more like walking than dancing. But he said not a word about the floor. "Your first dance, isn't it?" he murmured.

"How *did* you know?"

"Ah," said the fat man, "that's what it is to be old!" He wheezed faintly as he steered her past an awkward

couple. "You see, I've been doing this kind of thing for the last thirty years."

"Thirty years?" cried Leila. Twelve years before she was born!

"It hardly bears thinking about, does it?" said the fat man gloomily. Leila looked at his bald head, and she felt quite sorry for him.

"I think it's marvelous to be still going on," she said kindly.

"Kind little lady," said the fat man, and he pressed her a little closer, and hummed a bar of the waltz. "Of course," he said, "you can't hope to last anything like as long as that. No-o," said the fat man, "long before that you'll be sitting up there on the stage, looking on, in your nice black velvet. And these pretty arms will have turned into little short fat ones, and you'll beat time with such a different kind of fan—a black bony one." The fat man seemed to shudder. "And you'll smile away like the poor old dears up there, and point to your daughter, and tell the elderly lady next to you how some dreadful man tried to kiss her at the club ball. And your heart will ache, ache"—the fat man squeezed her closer still, as if he really was sorry for that poor heart—"because no one wants to kiss you now. And you'll say how unpleasant these polished floors are to walk on, how dangerous they are. Eh, Mademoiselle Twinkletoes?" said the fat man softly.

Leila gave a light little laugh, but she did not feel like laughing. Was it—could it all be true? It sounded terribly true. Was this first ball only the beginning of her last ball after all? At that the music seemed to change; it sounded sad, sad; it rose upon a great sigh.

Oh, how quickly things changed! Why didn't happiness last for ever? For ever wasn't a bit too long.

"I want to stop," she said in a breathless voice. The fat man led her to the door.

"No," she said, "I won't go outside. I won't sit down. I'll just stand here, thank you." She leaned against the wall, tapping with her foot, pulling up her gloves and trying to smile. But deep inside her a little girl threw her pinafore over her head and sobbed. Why had he spoiled it all?

"I say, you know," said the fat man, "you mustn't take me seriously, little lady."

"As if I should!" said Leila, tossing her small dark head and sucking her underlip. . . .

Again the couples paraded. The swing doors opened and shut. Now new music was given out by the bandmaster. But Leila didn't want to dance any more. She wanted to be home, or sitting on the veranda listening to those baby owls. When she looked through the dark windows at the stars, they had long beams like wings. . . .

But presently a soft, melting, ravishing tune began, and a young man with curly hair bowed before her. She would have to dance, out of politeness, until she could find Meg. Very stiffly she walked into the middle; very haughtily she put her hand on his sleeve. But in one minute, in one turn, her feet glided, glided. The lights, the azaleas, the dresses, the pink faces, the velvet chairs, all became one beautiful flying wheel. And when her next partner bumped her into the fat man and he said, "Par*don,*" she smiled at him more radiantly than ever. She didn't even recognize him again.

THE KEEPER OF THE LIGHT

by Henry Van Dyke

HENRY VAN DYKE

When Henry Van Dyke was a boy in Brooklyn, playing baseball, going to school and reading as many books as he could, it never occurred to him that he himself might write. In fact, the first idea for doing so came to him through a friend when he himself was seventeen and a sophomore in Princeton University. *The Nassau Literary Magazine* had announced an essay competition and the friend suggested submitting something in the contest. The thought at once appealed to Henry Van Dyke who thereupon wrote *An Ideal in Art*. To his amazement, his essay was awarded first prize. This encouraged him and from then on during his college years he wrote stories, sketches and verse, submitting so much to the college publications that he was forced to use several different pen names.

Upon his graduation from Princeton, he entered the ministry, a profession in which he spent twenty-five years. He did not, however, lose his interest in writing, always planning to return to it when he could. He enjoyed travel, and invariably vacation meant a visit to some interesting region, preferably remote from crowded routes. It was never enough for him to go quickly through any countryside. He liked to settle down, to get acquainted with the people there and with what they were doing. His first magazine article during these years was a description of a trip taken with a painter friend to the Northwest, where wheat farming by machinery was just beginning on a large scale.

By careful planning, despite the many demands upon him, he was able to complete *The Story of the Other Wise Man, Little River* and other books. *The Keeper of the Light* is from *The Ruling Passion* a collection of stories about the Canada country Henry Van Dyke so loves and of his friends there. He is now once more at Princeton University, a member of the English department. And at his home, Avalon, he is still finding time for his own writing.

THE KEEPER OF THE LIGHT

By Henry Van Dyke

AT LONG distance, looking over the blue waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in clear weather, you might think that you saw a lonely sea-gull, snow-white, perching motionless on a cobble of gray rock. Then, as your boat drifted in, following the languid tide and the soft southern breeze, you would perceive that the cobble of rock was a rugged hill with a few bushes and stunted trees growing in the crevices, and that the gleaming speck near the summit must be some kind of a building—if you were on the coast of Italy or Spain you would say a villa or a farm-house. Then, as you floated still farther north and drew nearer to the coast, the desolate hill would detach itself from the mainland and become a little mountain-isle, with a flock of smaller islets clustering around it as a brood of wild ducks keep close to their mother, and with deep water, nearly two miles wide, flowing between it and the shore; while the shining speck on the seaward side stood out clearly as a low, whitewashed dwelling with a sturdy round tower at one end, crowned with a big eight-sided lantern—a solitary lighthouse.

That is the Isle of the Wise Virgin. Behind it the long blue Laurentian Mountains, clothed with unbroken forest, rise in somber ranges toward the Height of Land. In front of it the waters of the gulf heave and sparkle

far away to where the dim peaks of St. Anne des Monts are traced along the southern horizon. Sheltered a little, but not completely, by the island breakwater of granite, lies the rocky beach of Dead Men's Point, where an English navy was wrecked in a night of storm a hundred years ago.

There are a score of wooden houses, a tiny, weather-beaten chapel, a Hudson Bay Company's store, a row of platforms for drying fish, and a varied assortment of boats and nets, strung along the beach now. Dead Men's Point has developed into a center of industry, with a life, a tradition, a social character of its own. And in one of those houses, as you sit at the door in the lingering June twilight, looking out across the deep channel to where the lantern of the tower is just beginning to glow with orange radiance above the shadow of the island—in that far-away place, in that mystical hour, you should hear the story of the light and its keeper.

I

When the lighthouse was built, many years ago, the island had another name. It was called the Isle of Birds. Thousands of sea-fowl nested there. The handful of people who lived on the shore robbed the nests and slaughtered the birds, with considerable profit. It was perceived in advance that the building of the lighthouse would interfere with this, and with other things. Hence it was not altogether a popular improvement. Marcel Thibault, the oldest inhabitant, was the leader of the opposition.

"That lighthouse!" said he, "what good will it be for us? We know the way in and out when it makes clear

weather, by day or by night. But when the sky gets swampy, when it makes fog, then we stay with ourselves at home, or we run into La Trinité, or Pentecôte. We know the way. What? The stranger boats? *B'en!* the stranger boats need not to come here, if they know not the way. The more fish, the more seals, the more everything will there be left for us. Just because of the stranger boats, to build something that makes all the birds wild and spoils the hunting—that is a fool's work. The good God made no stupid light on the Isle of Birds. He saw no necessity of it.

"Besides," continued Thibault, puffing slowly at his pipe, "besides—those stranger boats, sometimes they are lost, they come ashore. It is sad! But who gets the things that are saved, all sorts of things, good to put into our houses, good to eat, good to sell, sometimes a boat that can be patched up almost like new—who gets these things, eh? Doubtless those for whom the good God intended them. But who shall get them when this *sacré* lighthouse is built, eh? Tell me that, you Baptiste Fortin."

Fortin represented the party of progress in the little parliament of the beach. He had come down from Quebec some years ago bringing with him a wife and two little daughters, and a good many new notions about life. He had good luck at the codfishing, and built a house with windows at the side as well as in front. When his third girl, Nataline, was born, he went so far as to paint the house red, and put on a kitchen, and enclose a bit of ground for a yard. This marked him as a radical, an innovator. It was expected that he would defend the building of the lighthouse. And he did.

"Monsieur Thibault," he said, "you talk well, but you talk too late. It is of a past age, your talk. A new time comes to the Côte Nord. We begin to civilize ourselves. To hold back against the light would be our shame. Tell me this, Marcel Thibault, what men are they that love darkness?"

"*Torrieux!*" growled Thibault, "that is a little strong. You say my deeds are evil?"

"No, no," answered Fortin; "I say not that, my friend, but I say this lighthouse means good: good for us, and good for all who come to this coast. It will bring more trade to us. It will bring a boat with the mail, with newspapers, perhaps once, perhaps twice a month, all through the summer. It will bring us into the great world. To lose that for the sake of a few birds—*ça sera b'en de valeur!* Besides, it is impossible. The lighthouse is coming, certain."

Fortin was right, of course. But Thibault's position was not altogether unnatural, nor unfamiliar. All over the world, for the past hundred years, people have been kicking against the sharpness of the pricks that drove them forward out of the old life, the wild life, the free life, grown dear to them because it was so easy. There has been a terrible interference with bird-nesting and other things. All over the world the great Something that bridges rivers, and tunnels mountains, and fells forests, and populates deserts, and opens up the hidden corners of the earth, has been pushing steadily on; and the people who like things to remain as they are have had to give up a great deal. There was no exception made in favor of Dead Men's Point. The Isle of Birds lay in the line of progress. The lighthouse arrived.

It was a very good house for that day. The keeper's dwelling had three rooms and was solidly built. The tower was thirty feet high. The lantern held a revolving light, with a four-wick Fresnel lamp, burning sperm oil. There was one of Stevenson's new cages of dioptric prisms around the flame, and once every minute it was turned by clockwork, flashing a broad belt of radiance fifteen miles across the sea. All night long that big bright eye was opening and shutting. "*Baguette!*" said Thibault, "it winks like a one-eyed Windigo."

The Department of Marine and Fisheries sent down an expert from Quebec to keep the light in order and run it for the first summer. He took Fortin as his assistant. By the end of August he reported to headquarters that the light was all right, and that Fortin was qualified to be appointed keeper. Before October was out the certificate of appointment came back, and the expert packed his bag to go up the river.

"Now look here, Fortin," said he, "this is no fishing trip. Do you think you are up to this job?"

"I suppose," said Fortin.

"Well now, do you remember all this business about the machinery that turns the lenses? That's the main thing. The bearings must be kept well oiled, and the weight must never get out of order. The clock-face will tell you when it is running right. If anything gets hitched up here's the crank to keep it going until you can straighten the machine again. It's easy enough to turn it. But you must never let it stop between dark and daylight. The regular turn once a minute—that's the mark of this light. If it shines steady it might as well be out. Yes, better! Any vessel coming along here in a

dirty night and seeing a fixed light would take it for the Cap Loup-Marin and run ashore. This particular light has got to revolve once every minute every night from April first to December tenth, certain. Can you do it?"

"Certain," said Fortin.

"That's the way I like to hear a man talk! Now, you've got oil enough to last you through till the tenth of December, when you close the light, and to run on for a month in the spring after you open again. The ice may be late in going out and perhaps the supply-boat can't get down before the middle of April, or thereabouts. But she'll bring plenty of oil when she comes, so you'll be all right."

"All right," said Fortin.

"Well, I've said it all, I guess. You understand what you've got to do? Good-by and good luck. You're the keeper of the light now."

"Good luck," said Fortin, "I am going to keep it."

The same day he shut up the red house on the beach and moved to the white house on the island with Marie-Anne, his wife, and the three girls, Alma, aged seventeen, Azilda, aged fifteen, and Nataline, aged thirteen. He was the captain, and Marie-Anne was the mate, and the three girls were the crew. They were all as full of happy pride as if they had come into possession of a great fortune.

It was the thirty-first day of October. A snow-shower had silvered the island. The afternoon was clear and beautiful. As the sun sloped toward the rose-colored hills of the mainland the whole family stood out in front of the lighthouse looking up at the tower.

"Regard him well, my children," said Baptiste: "God has given him to us to keep, and to keep us. Thibault says he is a Windigo. *B'en!* We shall see that he is a friendly Windigo. Every minute all the night he shall wink, just for kindness and good luck to all the world, till the daylight."

II

On the ninth of November, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Baptiste went into the tower to see that the clockwork was in order for the night. He set the dial on the machine, put a few drops of oil on the bearings of the cylinder, and started to wind up the weight.

It rose a few inches, gave a dull click, and then stopped dead. He tugged a little harder, but it would not move. Then he tried to let it down. He pushed at the lever that set the clockwork in motion.

He might as well have tried to make the island turn around by pushing at one of the little spruce trees that clung to the rock.

Then it dawned fearfully upon him that something must be wrong. Trembling with anxiety, he climbed up and peered in among the wheels.

The escapement wheel was cracked clean through, as if some one had struck it with the head of an ax, and one of the pallets of the spindle was stuck fast in the crack. He could knock it out easily enough, but when the crack came around again, the pallet would catch and the clock would stop once more. It was a fatal injury.

Baptiste turned white, then red, gripped his head in his hands, and ran down the steps, out of the door,

straight toward his canoe, which was pulled up on the western side of the island.

"*Dâme!*" he cried, "who has done this? Let me catch him! If that old Thibault—"

As he leaped down the rocky slope the setting sun gleamed straight in his eyes. It was poised like a ball of fire on the very edge of the mountains. Five minutes more and it would be gone. Fifteen minutes more and darkness would close in. Then the giant's eye must begin to glow, and to wink precisely once a minute all night long. If not, what became of the keeper's word, his faith, his honor?

No matter how the injury to the clockwork was done. No matter who was to be blamed or punished for it. That could wait. The question now was whether the light would fail or not. And it must be answered within a quarter of an hour.

That red ray of the vanishing sun was like a blow in the face to Baptiste. It stopped him short, dazed and bewildered. Then he came to himself, wheeled, and ran up the rocks faster than he had come down.

"Marie-Anne! Alma!" he shouted, as he dashed past the door of the house, "all of you! To me, in the tower!"

He was up in the lantern when they came running in, full of curiosity, excited, asking twenty questions at once. Nataline climbed up the ladder and put her head through the trap-door.

"What is it?" she panted. "What has hap—"

"Go down," answered her father, "go down all at once. Wait for me. I am coming. I will explain."

The explanation was not altogether lucid and scientific. There were some bad words mixed up with it.

Baptiste was still hot with anger and the unsatisfied desire to whip somebody, he did not know whom, for something, he did not know what. But angry as he was, he was still sane enough to hold his mind hard and close to the main point. The crank must be adjusted; the machine must be ready to turn before dark. While he worked he hastily made the situation clear to his listeners.

That crank must be turned by hand, round and round all night, not too slow, not too fast. The dial on the machine must mark time with the clock on the wall. The light must flash once every minute until daybreak. He would do as much of the labor as he could, but the wife and the two older girls must help him. Nataline could go to bed.

At this Nataline's short upper lip trembled. She rubbed her eyes with the sleeve of her dress, and began to weep silently.

"What is the matter with you?" said her mother, "bad child, have you fear to sleep alone? A big girl like you!"

"No," she sobbed, "I have no fear, but I want some of the fun."

"Fun!" growled her father. "What fun? *Nom d'un chien!* She calls this fun!" He looked at her for a moment, as she stood there, half defiant, half despondent, with her red mouth quivering and her big brown eyes sparkling fire; then he burst into a hearty laugh.

"Come here, my little wild-cat," he said, drawing her to him and kissing her; "you are a good girl after all. I suppose you think this light is part yours, eh?"

The girl nodded.

"*B'en!* You shall have your share, fun and all. You

shall make the tea for us and bring us something to eat. Perhaps when Alma and 'Zilda fatigue themselves they will permit a few turns of the crank to you. Are you content? Run now and boil the kettle."

It was a very long night. No matter how easily a handle turns, after a certain number of revolutions there is a stiffness about it. The stiffness is not in the handle, but in the hand that pushes it.

Round and round, evenly, steadily, minute after minute, hour after hour, shoving out, drawing in, circle after circle, no swerving, no stopping, no varying the motion, turn after turn—fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven—what's the use of counting? Watch the dial; go to sleep—no! for God's sake, no sleep! But how hard it is to keep awake! How heavy the arm grows, how stiffly the muscles move, how the will creaks and groans. *Batiscan!* It is not easy for a human being to become part of a machine.

Fortin himself took the longest spell at the crank, of course. He went at his work with a rigid courage. His red-hot anger had cooled down into a shape that was like a bar of forged steel. He meant to make that light revolve if it killed him to do it. He was the captain of a company that had run into an ambuscade. He was going to fight his way through if he had to fight alone.

The wife and the two older girls followed him blindly and bravely, in the habit of sheer obedience. They did not quite understand the meaning of the task, the honor of victory, the shame of defeat. But Fortin said it must be done, and he knew best. So they took their places in turn, as he grew weary, and kept the light flashing.

And Nataline—well, there is no way of describing what Nataline did, except to say that she played the fife.

She felt the contest just as her father did, not as deeply, perhaps, but in the same spirit. She went into the fight with darkness like a little soldier. And she played the fife.

When she came up from the kitchen with the smoking pail of tea, she rapped on the door and called out to know whether the Windigo was at home tonight.

She ran in and out of the place like a squirrel. She looked up at the light and laughed. Then she ran in and reported. "He winks," she said, "old one-eye winks beautifully. Keep him going. My turn now!"

She refused to be put off with a shorter spell than the other girls. "No," she cried, "I can do it as well as you. You think you are so much older. Well, what of that? The light is part mine; father said so. Let me turn. *Va-t-en.*"

When the first glimmer of the little day came shivering along the eastern horizon, Nataline was at the crank. The mother and the two older girls were half asleep. Baptiste stepped out to look at the sky. "Come," he cried, returning. "We can stop now, it is growing gray in the east, almost morning."

"But not yet," said Nataline: "we must wait for the first red. A few more turns. Let's finish it up with a song."

She shook her head and piped up the refrain of the old Canadian *chanson*:

"En roulant ma boule-le roulant
En roulant ma bou-le."

And to that cheerful music the first night's battle was carried through to victory.

The next day Fortin spent two hours in trying to

repair the clockwork. It was of no use. The broken part was indispensable and could not be replaced.

At noon he went over to the mainland to tell of the disaster, and perhaps to find out if any hostile hand was responsible for it. He found out nothing. Every one denied all knowledge of the accident. Perhaps there was a flaw in the wheel; perhaps it had broken itself. That was possible. Fortin could not deny it; but the thing that hurt him most was that he got so little sympathy. Nobody seemed to care whether the light was kept burning or not. When he told them how the machine had been turned all night by hand, they were astonished. "*Cré-ié!*" they cried, "you must have had a great misery to do that." But that he proposed to go on doing it for a month longer, until December tenth, and to begin again on April first, and go on turning the light by hand for three or four weeks more until the supply-boat came down and brought the necessary tools to repair the machine—such an idea as this went beyond their horizon.

"But you are crazy, Baptiste," they said, "you can never do it; you are not capable."

"I would be crazy," he answered, "if I did not see what I must do. That light is my charge. In all the world there is nothing else so great as that for me and for my family—you understand? For us it is the chief thing. It is my Ten Commandments. I shall keep it or be damned."

There was a silence after this remark. They were not very particular about the use of language at Dead Men's Point, but this shocked them a little. They thought that Fortin was swearing a shade too hard. In reality he was never more reverent, never more soberly in earnest.

After a while he continued, "I want some one to help me with the work on the island. We must be up all the nights now. By day we must get some sleep. I want another man or a strong boy. Is there any who will come? The Government will pay. Or if not, I will pay, *moi-même.*"

There was no response. All the men hung back. The lighthouse was still unpopular, or at least it was on trial. Fortin's pluck and resolution had undoubtedly impressed them a little. But they still hesitated to commit themselves to his side.

"*B'en,*" he said, "there is no one. Then we shall manage the affair *en famille. Bon soir, messieurs!*"

He walked down to the beach with his head in the air, without looking back. But before he had his canoe in the water he heard some one running down behind him. It was Thibault's youngest son, Marcel, a well-grown boy of sixteen, very much out of breath with running and shyness.

"Monsieur Fortin," he stammered, "will you—do you think—am I big enough?"

Baptiste looked him in the face for a moment. Then his eyes twinkled.

"Certain," he answered, "you are bigger than your father. But what will he say to this?"

"He says," blurted out Marcel—"well, he says that he will say nothing if I do not ask him."

So the little Marcel was enlisted on the crew of the island. For thirty nights those six people—a man, and a boy, and four women (Nataline was not going to submit to any distinctions on the score of age, you may

be sure)—for a full month they turned their flashing lantern by hand from dusk to daybreak.

The fog, the frost, the hail, the snow beleaguered their tower. Hunger and cold, sleeplessness and weariness, pain and discouragement, held rendezvous in that dismal, cramped little room. Many a night Nataline's fife of fun played a feeble, wheezy note. But it played. And the crank went round. And every bit of glass in the lantern was as clear as polished crystal. And the big lamp was full of oil. And the great eye of the friendly giant winked without ceasing, through fierce storm and placid moonlight.

When the tenth of December came, the light went to sleep for the winter, and the keepers took their way across the ice to the mainland. They had won the battle, not only on the island, fighting against the elements, but also at Dead Men's Point, against public opinion. The inhabitants began to understand that the lighthouse meant something—a law, an order, a principle.

Men cannot help feeling respect for a thing when they see others willing to fight or to suffer for it.

When the time arrived to kindle the light again in the spring, Fortin could have had any one that he wanted to help him. But no; he chose the little Marcel again; the boy wanted to go, and he had earned the right. Besides, he and Nataline had struck up a close friendship on the island, cemented during the winter by various hunting excursions after hares and ptarmigan. Marcel was a skillful setter of snares. But Nataline was not content until she had won consent to borrow her father's *carabine*. They hunted in partnership. One day they had shot a fox. That is, Nataline had

shot it, though Marcel had seen it first and tracked it. Now they wanted to try for a seal on the point of the island when the ice went out. It was quite essential that Marcel should go.

"Besides," said Baptiste to his wife, confidentially, "a boy costs less than a man. Why should we waste money? Marcel is best."

A peasant-hero is seldom averse to economy in small things, like money.

But there was not much play in the spring session with the light on the island. It was a bitter job. December had been lamb-like compared with April. First, the southeast wind kept the ice driving in along the shore. Then the northwest wind came hurtling down from the Arctic wilderness like a pack of wolves. There was a snowstorm of four days and nights that made the whole world—earth and sky and sea—look like a crazy white chaos. And through it all, that weary, dogged crank must be kept turning—turning from dark to daylight.

It seemed as if the supply-boat would never come. At last they saw it, one fair afternoon, April the twenty-ninth, creeping slowly down the coast. They were just getting ready for another night's work.

Fortin ran out of the tower, took off his hat, and began to say his prayers. The wife and the two elder girls stood in the kitchen door, crossing themselves, with tears in their eyes. Marcel and Nataline were coming up from the point of the island, where they had been watching for their seal. She was singing

Mon père n'avait fille que moi,
Encore sur la mer il m'envoi-e-eh!

When she saw the boat she stopped short for a minute.

"Well," she said, "they find us awake, *n'est-c'pas?* And if they don't come faster than that we'll have another chance to show them how we make the light wink, eh?"

Then she went on with her song—

Sautez, mignonne, Cécilia.
Ah, ah, ah, ah, Cécilia!

III

You did not suppose that was the end of the story, did you?

No, an out-of-doors story does not end like that, broken off in the middle, with a bit of a song. It goes on to something definite, like a wedding or a funeral.

You have not heard, yet, how near the light came to failing, and how the keeper saved it and something else too. Nataline's story is not told; it is only begun. This first part is only the introduction, just to let you see what kind of a girl she was, and how her life was made. If you want to hear the conclusion, we must hurry along a little faster or we shall never get to it.

Nataline grew up like a young birch tree—stately and strong, good to look at. She was beautiful in her place; she fitted it exactly. Her bronzed face with an under-tinge of red; her low, black eyebrows; her clear eyes like the brown waters of a woodland stream; her dark, curly hair with little tendrils always blowing loose around the pillar of her neck; her broad breast and sloping shoulders; her firm, fearless step; her voice, rich and vibrant; her straight, steady looks—but there,

who can describe a thing like that? I tell you she was a girl to love out-of-doors.

There was nothing that she could not do. She could cook; she could swing an ax; she could paddle a canoe; she could fish; she could shoot; and, best of all, she could run the lighthouse. Her father's devotion to it had gone into her blood. It was the center of her life, her law of God. There was nothing about it that she did not understand and love. From the first of April to the tenth of December the flashing of that light was like the beating of her heart—steady, even, unfaltering. She kept time to it as unconsciously as the tides follow the moon. She lived by it and for it.

There were no more accidents to the clockwork after the first one was repaired. It ran on regularly, year after year.

Alma and Azilda were married and went away to live, one on the South Shore, the other at Quebec. Nataline was her father's right-hand man. As the rheumatism took hold of him and lamed his shoulders and wrists, more and more of the work fell upon her. She was proud of it.

At last it came to pass, one day in January, that Baptiste died. He was not gathered to his fathers, for they were buried far away beside the Montmorenci, and on the rocky coast of Brittany. But the men dug through the snow behind the tiny chapel at Dead Men's Point, and made a grave for Baptiste Fortin, and the young priest of the mission read the funeral service over it.

It went without saying that Nataline was to be the keeper of the light, at least until the supply-boat came

down again in the spring and orders arrived from the Government in Quebec. Why not? She was a woman, it is true. But if a woman can do a thing as well as a man, why should she not do it? Besides, Nataline could do this particular thing much better than any man on the Point. Everybody approved of her as the heir of her father, especially young Marcel Thibault.

What?

Yes, of course. You could not help guessing it. He was Nataline's lover. They were to be married the next summer. They sat together in the best room, while the old mother was rocking to and fro and knitting beside the kitchen stove, and talked of what they were going to do. Once in a while, when Nataline grieved for her father, she would let Marcel put his arm around her and comfort her in the way that lovers know. But their talk was mainly of the future, because they were young, and of the light, because Nataline's life belonged to it.

Perhaps the Government would remember that year when it was kept going by hand for two months, and give it to her to keep as long as she lived. That would be only fair. Certainly, it was hers for the present. No one had as good a right to it. She took possession without a doubt. At all events, while she was the keeper the light should not fail.

But that winter was a bad one on the North Shore, and particularly at Dead Men's Point. It was terribly bad. The summer before, the fishing had been almost a dead failure. In June a wild storm had smashed all the salmon nets and swept most of them away. In July they could find no caplin for bait for the cod-fishing,

and in August and September they could find no cod. The few bushels of potatoes that some of the inhabitants had planted, rotted in the ground. The people at the Point went into the winter short of money and very short of food.

There were some supplies at the store, pork and flour and molasses, and they could run through the year on credit and pay their debts the following summer if the fish came back. But this resource also failed them. In the last week of January the store caught fire and burned up. Nothing was saved. The only hope now was the seal-hunting in February and March and April. That at least would bring them meat and oil enough to keep them from starvation.

But this hope failed, too. The winds blew strong from the north and west, driving the ice far out into the gulf. The chase was long and perilous. The seals were few and wild. Less than a dozen were killed in all. But by the last week in March Dead Men's Point stood face to face with famine.

Then it was that old Thibault had an idea.

"There is sperm oil on the Island of Birds," said he, "in the lighthouse, plenty of it, gallons of it. It is not very good to taste, perhaps, but what of that? It will keep life in the body. The Esquimaux drink it in the north, often. We must take the oil of the lighthouse to keep us from starving until the supply-boat comes down."

"But how shall we get it?" asked the others. "It is locked up. Nataline Fortin has the key. Will she give it?"

"Give it?" growled Thibault. "Name of a name! of course she will give it. She must. Is not a life, the life of all of us, more than a light?"

A self-appointed committee of three, with Thibault, at the head, waited upon Nataline without delay, told her their plan, and asked for the key. She thought it over silently for a few minutes, and then refused point-blank.

"No," she said, "I will not give the key. That oil is for the lamp. If you take it, the lamp will not be lighted on the first of April; it will not be burning when the supply-boat comes. For me, that would be shame, disgrace, worse than death. I am the keeper of the light. You shall not have the oil."

They argued with her, pleaded with her, tried to brow-beat her. She was a rock. Her round under-jaw was set like a steel trap. Her lips straightened into a white line. Her eyebrows drew together, and her eyes grew black.

"No," she cried, "I tell you no, no, a thousand times no. All in this house I will share with you. But not one drop of what belongs to the light! Never!"

Later in the afternoon the priest came to see her; a thin, pale young man, bent with the hardships of his life, and with sad dreams in his sunken eyes. He talked with her very gently and kindly.

"Think well, my daughter; think seriously what you do. Is it not our first duty to save human life? Surely that must be according to the will of God. Will you refuse to obey it?"

Nataline was trembling a little now. Her brows were unlocked. The tears stood in her eyes and ran down her cheeks. She was twisting her hands together.

"NOT ONE DROP OF WHAT BELONGS TO THE LIGHT! NEVER!"

"My father," she answered, "I desire to do the will of God. But how shall I know it? Is it not His first command that we should love and serve Him faithfully in the duty which He has given us? He gave me this light to keep. My father kept it. He is dead. If I am unfaithful what will he say to me? Besides, the supply-boat is coming soon—I have thought of this—when it comes it will bring food. But if the light is out, the boat may be lost. That would be the punishment for my sin. No, *mon père,* we must trust God. He will keep the people. I will keep the light."

The priest looked at her long and steadily. A glow came into his face. He put his hand on her shoulder. "You shall follow your conscience," he said quietly. "Peace be with you, Nataline."

That evening just at dark Marcel came. She let him take her in his arms and kiss her. She felt like a little child, tired and weak.

"Well," he whispered, "you have done bravely, sweetheart. You were right not to give the key. That would have been a shame to you. But it is all settled now. They will have the oil without your fault. Tonight they are going out to the lighthouse to break in and take what they want. You need not know. There will be no blame—"

She straightened in his arms as if an electric shock had passed through her. She sprang back, blazing with anger.

"What?" she cried, "me a thief by round-about,—with my hand behind my back and my eyes shut? Never. Do you think I care only for the blame? I tell you that is nothing. My light shall not be robbed, never, never!"

She came close to him and took him by the shoulders. Their eyes were on a level. He was a strong man, but she was the stronger then.

"Marcel Thibault," she said, "do you love me?"

"My faith," he gasped, "I do. You know I do."

"Then listen," she continued; "this is what you are going to do. You are going down to the shore at once to make ready the big canoe. I am going to get food enough to last us for the month. It will be a hard pinch, but it will do. Then we are going out to the island tonight, in less than an hour. Day after tomorrow is the first of April. Then we shall light the lantern, and it shall burn every night until the boat comes down. You hear? Now go: and be quick: and bring your gun."

IV

They pushed off in the black darkness, among the fragments of ice that lay along the shore. They crossed the strait in silence, and hid their canoe among the rocks on the island. They carried their stuff up to the house and locked it in the kitchen. Then they unlocked the tower, and went in, Marcel with his shot-gun, and Nataline with her father's old *carabine*. They fastened the door again, and bolted it, and sat down in the dark to wait.

Presently they heard the grating of the prow of the barge on the stones below, the steps of men stumbling up the steep path, and voices mingled in confused talk. The glimmer of a couple of lanterns went bobbing in and out among the rocks and bushes. There was a little crowd of eight or ten men, and they came on carelessly, chattering and laughing. Three of them carried

axes, and three others a heavy log of wood which they had picked up on their way.

"The log is better than the axes," said one; "take it in your hands this way, two of you on one side, another on the opposite side in the middle. Then swing it back and forwards and let it go. The door will come down, I tell you, like a sheet of paper. But wait till I give the word, then swing hard. One—two—"

"Stop!" cried Nataline, throwing open the little window. "If you dare to touch that door, I shoot."

She thrust out the barrel of the rifle, and Marcel's shot-gun appeared beside it. The old rifle was not loaded, but who knew that? Besides, both barrels of the shot-gun were full.

There was amazement in the crowd outside the tower, and consternation, and then anger.

"Marcel," they shouted, "you there? *Maudit polisson!* Come out of that. Let us in. You told us—"

"I know," answered Marcel, "but I was mistaken, that is all. I stand by Mademoiselle Fortin. What she says is right. If any man tries to break in here, we kill him. No more talk!"

The gang muttered; cursed; threatened; looked at the guns; and went off to their boat.

"It is murder that you will do," one of them called out, "you are a murderess, you Mademoiselle Fortin! you cause the people to die of hunger!"

"Not I," she answered; "that is as the good God pleases. No matter. The light shall burn."

They heard the babble of the men as they stumbled down the hill; the grinding of the boat on the rocks as they shoved off; the rattle of the oars in the row-

locks. After that the island was as still as a graveyard.

Then Nataline sat down on the floor in the dark, and put her face in her hands, and cried. Marcel tried to comfort her. She took his hand and pushed it gently away from her waist.

"No, Marcel," she said, "not now! Not that, please, Marcel! Come into the house. I want to talk with you."

They went into the cold, dark kitchen, lit a candle and kindled a fire in the stove. Nataline busied herself with a score of things. She put away the poor little store of provisions, sent Marcel for a pail of water, made some tea, spread the table, and sat down opposite to him. For a time she kept her eyes turned away from him, while she talked about all sorts of things. Then she fell silent for a little, still not looking at him. She got up and moved about the room, arranged two or three packages on the shelves, shut the damper of the stove, glancing at Marcel's back out of the corners of her eyes. Then she came back to her chair, pushed her cup aside, rested both elbows on the table and her chin in her hands, and looked Marcel square in the face with her clear brown eyes.

"My friend," she said, "are you an honest man, *un brave garçon?*"

For an instant he could say nothing. He was so puzzled. "Why, yes, Nataline," he answered, "yes, surely —I hope."

"Then let me speak to you without fear," she continued. "You do not suppose that I am ignorant of what I have done this night. I am not a baby. You are a man. I am a girl. We are shut up alone in this house for two weeks, a month, God knows how long. You know what

that means, what people will say. I have risked all that a girl has most precious. I have put my good name in your hands."

Marcel tried to speak, but she stopped him.

"Let me finish. It is not easy to say. I know you are honorable. I trust you waking and sleeping. But I am a woman. There must be no love-making. We have other work to do. The light must not fail. You will not touch me, you will not embrace me—not once—till after the boat has come. Then"—she smiled at him like a sunburned angel—"well, is it a bargain?"

She put out one hand across the table. Marcel took it in both of his own. He did not kiss it. He lifted it up in front of his face.

"I swear to you, Nataline, you shall be to me as the Blessed Virgin herself."

The next day they put the light in order, and the following night they kindled it. They still feared another attack from the mainland, and thought it needful that one of them should be on guard all the time, though the machine itself was working beautifully and needed little watching. Nataline took the night duty; it was her own choice; she loved the charge of the lamp. Marcel was on duty through the day. They were together for three or four hours in the morning and in the evening.

It was not a desperate vigil like that affair with the broken clockwork eight years before. There was no weary turning of the crank. There was just enough work to do about the house and the tower to keep them busy. The weather was fair. The worst thing was the short supply of food. But though they were hungry, they were

not starving. And Nataline still played the fife. She jested, she sang, she told long fairy stories while they sat in the kitchen. Marcel admitted that it was not at all a bad arrangement.

But his thoughts turned very often to the arrival of the supply-boat. He hoped it would not be late. The ice was well broken up already and driven far out into the gulf. The boat ought to be able to run down the shore in good time.

One evening as Nataline came down from her sleep she saw Marcel coming up the rocks dragging a young seal behind him.

"Hurrah!" he shouted, "here is plenty of meat. I shot it out at the end of the island, about an hour ago."

But Nataline said that they did not need the seal. There was still food enough in the larder. On shore there must be greater need. Marcel must take the seal over to the mainland that night and leave it on the beach near the priest's house. He grumbled a little, but he did it.

That was on the twenty-third of April. The clear sky held for three days longer, calm, bright, halcyon weather. On the afternoon of the twenty-seventh the clouds came down from the north, not a long furious tempest, but a brief, sharp storm, with considerable wind and a whirling, blinding fall of April snow. It was a bad night for boats at sea, confusing, bewildering, a night when the lighthouse had to do its best. Nataline was in the tower all night, tending the lamp, watching the clockwork. Once it seemed to her that the lantern was so covered with snow that light could not shine through. She got her long brush and scraped the snow away. It was cold work, but she gloried in it. The bright

eye of the tower, winking, winking steadily through the storm seemed to be the sign of her power in the world. It was hers. She kept it shining.

When morning came the wind was still blowing fitfully off shore, but the snow had almost ceased. Nataline stopped the clockwork, and was just climbing up into the lantern to put out the lamp, when Marcel's voice hailed her.

"Come down, Nataline, come down quick. Make haste!"

She turned and hurried out, not knowing what was to come; perhaps a message of trouble from the mainland, perhaps a new assault on the lighthouse.

As she came out of the tower, her brown eyes heavy from the night-watch, her dark face pale from the cold, she saw Marcel standing on the rocky knoll beside the house and pointing shoreward.

She ran up beside him and looked. There, in the deep water between the island and the point, lay the supply-boat, rocking quietly on the waves.

It flashed upon her in a moment what it meant—the end of her fight, relief for the village, victory! And the light that had guided the little ship safe through the stormy night into the harbor was hers.

She turned and looked up at the lamp, still burning.

"I kept you!" she cried.

Then she turned to Marcel; the color rose quickly in her cheeks, the light sparkled in her eyes; she smiled, and held out both her hands, whispering, "Now you shall keep me!"

There was a fine wedding on the last day of April, and from that time the island took its new name,—the Isle of the Wise Virgin.

THE STAR LOVERS

by Grace James

GRACE JAMES

How is it that so lovely a book of Japanese legends as *Green Willow* should have been written by an Englishwoman, living in England? Because Grace James was born in Tokyo, where she lived until she was twelve. Because she had a Japanese nurse who told her of the Mist Man of the Spring Mountain, of the Frost Man of the Autumn Mountain, of Ko-no-hana-sakuya-hime, the Lady-who-causes-trees-to-bloom. Because she heard in school of the five fairies of the cherry blossoms, of the fairy of the wistaria and of the *basho*, the banana plant.

With her school fellows, she strained her eyes to see the Sea-King's palace. With them she watched the smoke of Mount Fuji and knew it to be the eternal token of the love of an Emperor's son for a princess—a love that, thwarted, yet burned on so brightly that its flame will forever rise to Heaven.

For in a land where ancestral traditions are held so dear, no day passes without the recounting of legends woven by those of other days about the streams and the inlets, the plains and the forests, the birds and the flowers of their loved country. In Japan, on Spring nights, the children watch for the spirit of the butterfly in pink robes and veiled in green wreaths. There, on steep and rocky heights, sacred deer roam.

Such were the stories Grace James heard as a child. And years after, because they were still so vivid to her and because, too, she herself was now a writer, she wrote of them and gathered them together in her book, *Green Willow*. Of them all, none is more cherished in Japan than this story of the Cow-Herd as he is known, one of the stars near the River of Heaven, which is our Milky Way, and who loves The Spinster, a star on the other side. Of their legendary meeting, the Japanese poet, Tsurayuki, has written:

It is I alone
Who am most miserable,
For no year passes,
In which even the Cow-Herd
Does not meet his love.

THE STAR LOVERS

By Grace James

All you that are true lovers, I beseech you pray the gods for fair weather upon the seventh night of the seventh moon.

For patience' sake and for dear love's sake, pray, and be pitiful that upon that night there may be neither rain, nor hail, nor cloud, nor thunder, nor creeping mist.

Hear the sad tale of the Star Lovers and give them your prayers.

The Weaving Maiden was the daughter of a Deity of Light. Her dwelling was upon the shore of the Milky Way, which is the Bright River of Heaven. All the day long she sat at her loom and plied her shuttle, weaving the gay garments of the gods. Warp and woof, hour by hour the colored web grew till it lay fold on fold piled at her feet. Still she never ceased her labor, for she was afraid. She had heard a saying:

"Sorrow, age-long sorrow, shall come upon the Weaving Maiden when she leaves her loom."

So she labored, and the gods had garments to spare. But she herself, poor maiden, was ill-clad; she recked nothing of her attire or of the jewels that her father gave her. She went barefoot, and let her hair hang down unconfined. Ever and anon a long lock fell upon the loom, and back she flung it over her shoulder. She did not play with the children of Heaven, or take her

pleasure with celestial youths and maidens. She did not love or weep. She was neither glad nor sorry. She sat weaving, weaving . . . and wove her being into the many-colored web.

Now her father, the Deity of Light, grew angry. He said, "Daughter, you weave too much."

"It is my duty," she said.

"At your age to talk of duty!" said her father. "Out upon you!"

"Wherefore are you displeased with me, my father?" she said, and her fingers plied the shuttle.

"Are you a stock or a stone, or a pale flower by the wayside?"

"Nay," she said, "I am none of these."

"Then leave your loom, my child, and live; take your pleasure, be as others are."

"And wherefore should I be as others are?" she said.

"Never dare to question me. Come, will you leave your loom?"

She said, "Sorrow, age-long sorrow, shall come upon the Weaving Maiden when she leaves her loom."

"A foolish saying," cried her father, "not worthy of credence. What do we know of age-long sorrow? Are we not gods?" With that he took her shuttle from her hand gently, and covered the loom with a cloth. And he caused her to be very richly attired, and they put jewels upon her and garlanded her head with flowers of Paradise. And her father gave her for spouse the Herd Boy of Heaven, who tended his flocks upon the banks of the Bright River.

Now the Maiden was changed indeed. Her eyes were stars and her lips were ruddy. She went dancing and

singing all the day. Long hours she played with the children of Heaven, and she took her pleasure with the celestial youths and maidens. Lightly she went; her feet were shod with silver. Her lover, the Herd Boy, held her by the hand. She laughed so that the very gods laughed with her, and High Heaven reëchoed with sounds of mirth. She was careless; little did she think of duty or of the garments of the gods. As for her loom, she never went near it from one moon's end to another.

"I have my life to live," she said; "I'll weave it into a web no more."

And the Herd Boy, her lover, clasped her in his arms. Her face was all tears and smiles, and she hid it on his breast. So she lived her life. But her father, the Deity of Light, was angry.

"It is too much," he said. "Is the girl mad? She will become the laughing-stock of Heaven. Besides, who is to weave the new spring garments of the gods?"

Three times he warned his daughter.

Three times she laughed softly and shook her head.

"Your hand opened the door, my father," she said, "but of a surety no hand either of god or of mortal can shut it."

He said, "You shall find it otherwise to your cost." And he banished the Herd Boy for ever and ever to the farther side of the Bright River. The magpies flew together, from far and near, and they spread their wings for a frail bridge across the river, and the Herd Boy went over by the frail bridge. And immediately the magpies flew away to the ends of the earth and the Weaving Maiden could not follow. She was the saddest

thing in Heaven. Long, long she stood upon the shore, and held out her arms to the Herd Boy, who tended his oxen desolate and in tears. Long, long she lay and wept upon the sand. Long, long she brooded, looking on the ground.

She arose and went to her loom. She cast aside the cloth that covered it. She took her shuttle in her hand.

"Age-long sorrow," she said, "age-long sorrow!" Presently she dropped the shuttle. "Ah," she moaned, "the pain of it," and she leaned her head against the loom.

But in a little while she said, "Yet I would not be as once I was. I did not love or weep, I was neither glad nor sorry. Now I love and I weep—I am glad, and I am sorry."

Her tears fell like rain, but she took up the shuttle and labored diligently, weaving the garments of the gods. Sometimes the web was gray with grief, sometimes it was rosy with dreams. The gods were fain to go strangely clad. The Maiden's father, the Deity of Light, for once was well pleased.

"That is my good, diligent child," he said. "Now you are quiet and happy."

"The quiet of dark despair," she said. "Happy! I am the saddest thing in Heaven."

"I am sorry," said the Deity of Light; "what shall I do?"

"Give me back my lover."

"Nay, child, that I cannot do. He is banished for ever and ever by the decree of a Deity, that cannot be broken."

"I knew it," she said.

IN THE SEVENTH MOON THESE TWO KEEP THEIR TRYST

"Yet something I can do. Listen. On the seventh day of the seventh moon, I will summon the magpies together from the ends of the earth, and they shall be a bridge over the Bright River of Heaven, so that the Weaving Maiden shall lightly cross to the waiting Herd Boy on the farther shore."

So it was. On the seventh day of the seventh moon came the magpies from far and near. And they spread their wings for a frail bridge. And the Weaving Maiden went over by the frail bridge. Her eyes were like stars, and her heart like a bird in her bosom. And the Herd Boy was there to meet her upon the farther shore.

And so it is still, oh, true lovers—upon the seventh day of the seventh moon these two keep their tryst. Only if the rain falls with thunder and cloud and hail, and the Bright River of Heaven is swollen and swift, the magpies cannot make a bridge for the Weaving Maiden. Alack, the dreary time!

Therefore, true lovers, pray the gods for fair weather.

AN UNFINISHED STORY

by Richard Harding Davis

RICHARD HARDING DAVIS

Richard Harding Davis' brother says that when they attended the Academy in Philadelphia, Richard's reports never failed to fill the house with gloom. But summers brought delight. From their cottage at Point Pleasant, the two would sally forth to an island in the Manasquan River, which Stevenson afterward christened *Treasure Island*. Here they camped "while lions and tigers growled from surrounding forests."

Richard's father was a newspaper editor, his mother a writer, their frequent guests the prominent writers, painters and actors of the day. The family's favorite lark was the matinée. As a boy Richard saw the great acting of Booth, Jefferson, Henry Irving and Ellen Terry. And already their world and his writing were far more absorbing to him than school or even the football he played so well.

From discouraging Academy days, Richard went to school in Lehigh, Pennsylvania, where he lived with an uncle who was a professor. Richard entered into his uncle's life with enthusiasm, making friends of every one. It was the gift which was to bring him fascinating adventures, colorful story material and to cause Finley Peter Dunne to say of him, "He knew more waiters, generals, actors and princes than any other man who lived."

Entering Lehigh University, he became editor of the college magazine, founder of the dramatic society and outstanding undergraduate writer. But he liked, too, to hike alone to remote farmhouses, getting acquainted with the farmers and writing home about it.

After college, he entered newspaper work where, through zestful and incessant and able endeavor, he became a brilliant newspaperman. Gibraltar, Cairo, Athens, Moscow, Budapest, Tokyo—the world was his assignment. Wherever unusual events were taking place, there was Richard Harding Davis, interpreting what happened. And the stories he wrote, and the plays, are vivid with those who in many countries quickly responded to the warmth of his interest in them.

You will find many of his finest stories in the collection *From Gallegher to the Deserter,* in which *An Unfinished Story* is published. And in each of his books, including *Soldiers of Fortune,* he shares his adventures with you.

AN UNFINISHED STORY

By Richard Harding Davis

MRS. TREVELYAN, as she took her seat, shot a quick glance down the length of her table and at the arrangement of her guests, and tried to learn if her lord and master approved. But he was listening to something Lady Arbuthnot, who sat on his right, was saying, and, being a man, failed to catch her meaning, and only smiled unconcernedly and cheerfully back at her. But the wife of the Austrian Minister, who was her very dearest friend, saw and appreciated, and gave her a quick little smile over her fan, which said that the table was perfect, the people most interesting, and that she could possess her soul in peace. So Mrs. Trevelyan pulled at the tips of her gloves and smiled upon her guests.

Mrs. Trevelyan was not used to questioning her powers, but this dinner had been almost impromptu, and she had been in doubt. It was quite unnecessary, for her dinner carried with it the added virtue of being the last of the season, an encore to all that had gone before—a special number by request on the social program. It was not one of many others stretching on for weeks, for the summer's change and leisure began on the morrow, and there was nothing hanging over her guests that they must go on to later. They knew that their luggage stood ready locked and strapped at home; they could look before them to the whole summer's pleasure, and they were relaxed and ready to be pleased, and broke simultaneously into a low murmur of talk

and laughter. The windows of the dining-room stood open from the floor, and from the tiny garden that surrounded the house, even in the great mass of stucco and brick of encircling London, came the odor of flowers and of fresh turf. A soft summer-night wind moved the candles under their red shades; and gently as though they rose from afar, and not only from across the top of the high wall before the house, came the rumble of the omnibuses passing farther into the suburbs, and the occasional quick rush of a hansom over the smooth asphalt. It was a most delightful choice of people, gathered at short notice and to do honor to no one in particular, but to give each a chance to say good-by before he or she met the yacht at Southampton or took the club train to Homburg.

They all knew each other very well; and if there was a guest of the evening, it was one of the two Americans —either Miss Egerton, the girl who was to marry Lord Arbuthnot, whose mother sat on Trevelyan's right, or young Gordon, the explorer, who had just come out of Africa. Miss Egerton was a most strikingly beautiful girl, with a strong, fine face, and an earnest, interested way when she spoke, which the English found most attractive. In appearance she had been variously likened by Trevelyan, who was painting her portrait, to a druidess, a vestal virgin, and a Greek goddess; and Lady Arbuthnot's friends, who thought to please the girl, assured her that no one would ever suppose her to be an American—their ideas of the American young woman having been gathered from those who pick out tunes with one finger on the pianos in the public parlors of the Métropole. Miss Egerton was said to be intensely

interested in her lover's career, and was as ambitious for his success in the House as he was himself. They were both very much in love, and showed it to others as little as people of their class do. The others at the table were General Sir Henry Kent; Phillips, the novelist; the Austrian Minister and his young wife; and Trevelyan, who painted portraits for large sums of money and figure pieces for art; and some simply fashionable smart people who were good listeners, and who were rather disappointed that the American explorer was no more sunburned than other young men who had stayed at home, and who had gone in for tennis or yachting.

The worst of Gordon was that he made it next to impossible for one to lionize him. He had been back in civilization and London only two weeks, unless Cairo and Shepheard's Hotel are civilization, and he had been asked everywhere, and for the first week had gone everywhere. But whenever his hostess looked for him, to present another and not so recent a lion, he was generally found either humbly carrying an ice to some neglected dowager, or talking big game or international yachting or tailors to a circle of younger sons in the smoking-room, just as though several hundred attractive and distinguished people were not waiting to fling the speeches they had prepared on Africa at him, in the drawing-room above. He had suddenly disappeared during the second week of his stay in London, which was also the last week of the London season, and managers of lecture tours and publishers and lion-hunters, and even friends who cared for him for himself, had failed to find him at his lodgings.

Trevelyan, who had known him when he was

a traveling correspondent and artist for one of the great weeklies, had found him at the club the night before, and had asked him to his wife's impromptu dinner, from which he had at first begged off, but, on learning who was to be there, had changed his mind and accepted. Mrs. Trevelyan was very glad he had come; she had always spoken of him as a nice boy, and now that he had become famous she liked him none the less, but did not show it before people as much as she had been used to do. She forgot to ask him whether he knew his beautiful compatriot or not; but she took it for granted that they had met, if not at home, at least in London, as they had been made so much of, and at the same houses.

The dinner was well on its way toward its end, and the women had begun to talk across the table, and to exchange bankers' addresses, and to say, "Be sure and look us up in Paris," and "When do you expect to sail from Cowes?" They were enlivened and interested, and the present odors of the food and flowers and wine, and the sense of leisure before them, made it seem almost a pity that such a well-suited gathering should have to separate for even a summer's pleasure.

The Austrian Minister was saying this to his hostess, when Sir Henry Kent, who had been talking across to Phillips, the novelist, leaned back in his place and said, as though to challenge the attention of every one, "I can't agree with you, Phillips. I am sure no one else will."

"Dear me," complained Mrs. Trevelyan, plaintively, "what have you been saying now, Mr. Phillips? He always has such debatable theories," she explained.

"On the contrary, Mrs. Trevelyan," answered the novelist, "it is the other way. It is Sir Henry who is making all the trouble. He is attacking one of the oldest and dearest platitudes I know." He paused for the general to speak, but the older man nodded his head for him to go on. "He has just said that fiction is stranger than truth," continued the novelist. "He says that I —that people who write could never interest people who read if they wrote of things as they really are. They select, he says—they take the critical moment in a man's life and the crisis, and want others to believe that that is what happens every day. Which it is not, so the general says. He thinks that life is commonplace and uneventful—that is, uneventful in a picturesque or dramatic way. He admits that women's lives are saved from drowning, but that they are not saved by their lovers, but by a longshoreman with a wife and six children, who accepts five pounds for doing it. That's it, is it not?" he asked.

The general nodded and smiled. "What I said to Phillips was," he explained, "that if things were related just as they happen, they would not be interesting. People do not say the dramatic things they say on the stage or in novels; in real life they are commonplace or sordid—or disappointing. I have seen men die on the battle-field, for instance, and they never cried, 'I die that my country may live,' or 'I have got my promotion at last'; they just stared up at the surgeon and said, 'Have I got to lose that arm?' or 'I am killed, I think.' You see, when men are dying around you, and horses are plunging, and the batteries are firing, one doesn't have time to think up the appropriate remark for the

occasion. I don't believe, now, that Pitt's last words were, 'Roll up the map of Europe.' A man who could change the face of a continent would not use his dying breath in making epigrams. It was one of his secretaries or one of the doctors who said that. And the man who was capable of writing home, 'All is lost but honor,' was just the sort of a man who would lose more battles than he would win. No; you, Phillips," said the general, raising his voice as he became more confident and conscious that he held the center of the stage, "and you, Trevelyan, don't write and paint every-day things as they are. You introduce something for a contrast or for an effect; a red coat in a landscape for the bit of color you want, when in real life the red coat would not be within miles."

"There was a man told me once," Lord Arbuthnot began, "he was a great chum of mine, and it illustrates what Sir Henry has said, I think—he was engaged to a girl, and he had a misunderstanding or an understanding with her that opened both their eyes, at a dance, and the next afternoon he called, and they talked it over in the drawing-room, with the tea-tray between them, and agreed to end it. On the stage he would have risen and said, 'Well, the comedy is over, the tragedy begins, or the curtain falls'; and she would have gone to the piano and played Chopin sadly while he made his exit. Instead of which he got up to go without saying anything, and as he rose he upset a cup and saucer on the tea-table, and said, 'Oh, I beg your pardon'; and she said, 'It isn't broken'; and he went out. You see," the young man added, smiling, "there were two young people whose hearts were breaking, and yet they talked

of teacups, not because they did not feel, but because custom is too strong on us and too much for us. We do not say dramatic things or do theatrical ones. It does not make interesting reading, but it is the truth."

"Exactly," cut in the Austrian Minister, eagerly. "And then there is the prerogative of the author and of the playwright to drop a curtain whenever he wants to, or to put a stop to everything by ending the chapter. That isn't fair. That is an advantage over nature. When some one accuses some one else of doing something dreadful at the play, down comes the curtain quick and keeps things at fever point, or the chapter ends with a lot of stars, and the next page begins with a description of a sunset two weeks later. To be true, we ought to be told what the man who is accused said in the reply, or what happened during those two weeks before the sunset. The author really has no right to choose only the critical moments, and to shut out the commonplace, every-day life by a sort of literary closure. That is, if he claims to tell the truth."

Phillips raised his eyebrows and looked carefully around the table. "Does any one else feel called upon to testify?" he asked.

"It's awful, isn't it, Phillips," laughed Trevelyan, comfortably, "to find that the photographer is the only artist, after all? I feel very guilty."

"You ought to," pronounced the general, gayly. He was very well satisfied with himself at having held his own against these clever people. "And I am sure Mr. Gordon will agree with me, too," he went on, confidently, with a bow toward the younger man. "He has seen more of the world than any of us, and he will tell

you, I am sure, that what happens only suggests the story; it is not complete in itself. That it always needs the author's touch; just as the rough diamond—"

"Oh, thanks, thanks, general," laughed Phillips. "My feelings are not hurt as badly as that."

Gordon had been turning the stem of a wine-glass slowly between his thumb and his finger while the others were talking, and looking down at it smiling. Now he raised his eyes as though he meant to speak, and then dropped them again. "I am afraid, Sir Henry," he said, "that I don't agree with you at all."

Those who had said nothing felt a certain satisfaction that they had not committed themselves. The Austrian Minister tried to remember what it was he had said, and whether it was too late to retreat, and the general looked blankly at Gordon, and said, "Indeed?"

"You shouldn't have called on that last witness, Sir Henry," said Phillips, smiling. "Your case was very good as it was."

"I am quite sure," said Gordon, seriously, "that the story Phillips will never write is a true story, but he will not write it because people would say it is impossible, just as you have all seen sunsets sometimes that you knew would be laughed at if any one tried to paint them. We all know such a story, something in our own lives, or in the lives of our friends. Not ghost stories, or stories of adventure, but of ambitions that come to nothing, of people who were rewarded or punished in this world instead of in the next, and love stories."

Phillips looked at the young man keenly and smiled. "Especially love stories," he said.

Gordon looked back at him as if he did not understand.

"Tell it, Gordon," said Mr. Trevelyan.

"Yes," said Gordon, nodding his head in assent, "I was thinking of a particular story. It is as complete, I think, and as dramatic as any of those we read. It is about a man I met in Africa. It is not a long story," he said, looking around the table tentatively, "but it ends badly."

There was a silence much more appreciated than a polite murmur of invitation would have been, and the simply smart people settled themselves rigidly to catch every word for future use. They realized that this would be a story which had not as yet appeared in the newspapers, and which would not make a part of Gordon's book. Mrs. Trevelyan smiled encouragingly upon her former protégé; she was sure he was going to do himself credit; but the American girl chose this chance, when all the other eyes were turned expectantly toward the explorer, to look at her lover.

"We were on our return march from Lake Tchad to the Mobangi," said Gordon. "We had been traveling over a month, sometimes by water and sometimes through the forest, and we did not expect to see any other white men besides those of our own party for several months to come. In the middle of a jungle late one afternoon I found this man lying at the foot of a tree. He had been cut and beaten and left for dead. It was as much of a surprise to me, you understand, as it would be to you if you were driving through Trafalgar Square in a hansom, and an African lion

should spring up on your horses' haunches. We believed we were the only white men that had ever succeeded in getting that far south. Crampel had tried it, and no one knows yet whether he is dead or alive; Doctor Schlemen had been eaten by cannibals, and Major Bethume had turned back two hundred miles farther north; and we could no more account for this man's presence than if he had been dropped from the clouds. Lieutenant Royce, my surgeon, went to work at him, and we halted where we were for the night. In about an hour the man moved and opened his eyes. He looked up at us and said, 'Thank God!'—because we were white, I suppose—and went off into unconsciousness again. When he came to the next time, he asked Royce, in a whisper, how long he had to live. He wasn't the sort of a man you had to lie to about a thing like that, and Royce told him he did not think he could live for more than an hour or two. The man moved his head to show that he understood, and raised his hand to his throat and began pulling at his shirt, but the effort sent him off into a fainting-fit again. I opened his collar for him as gently as I could, and found that his fingers had clinched around a silver necklace that he wore about his neck, and from which there hung a gold locket shaped like a heart."

Gordon raised his eyes slowly from the observation of his finger-tips as they rested on the edge of the table before him to those of the American girl who sat opposite. She had heard his story so far without any show of attention, and had been watching, rather with a touch of fondness in her eyes, the clever, earnest face of Arbuthnot, who was following Gordon's story with

polite interest. But now, at Gordon's last words, she turned her eyes to him with a look of awful indignation, which was followed, when she met his calmly polite look of inquiry, by one of fear and almost of entreaty.

"When the man came to," continued Gordon, in the same conventional monotone, "he begged me to take the chain and locket to a girl whom he said I would find either in London on in New York. He gave me the address of her banker. He said: 'Take it off my neck before you bury me; tell her I wore it ever since she gave it to me. That it has been a charm and loadstone to me. That when the locket rose and fell against my breast, it was as if her heart were pressing against mine and answering the beating and throbbing of the blood in my veins.' "

Gordon paused, and returned to the thoughtful scrutiny of his finger-tips.

"The man did not die," he said, raising his head. "Royce brought him back into such form again that in about a week we were able to take him along with us on a litter. But he was very weak, and would lie for hours sleeping when we rested, or mumbling and raving in a fever. We learned from him at odd times that he had been trying to reach Lake Tchad, to do what we had done, without any means of doing it. He had had not more than a couple of dozen porters and a corporal's guard of Senegalese soldiers. He was the only white man in the party, and his men had turned on him, and left him as we found him, carrying off with them his stock of provisions and arms. He had undertaken the expedition on a promise from the French government to make him governor of the territory he opened up

if he succeeded, but he had had no official help. If he failed, he got nothing; if he succeeded, he did so at his own expense and by his own endeavors. It was only a wonder he had been able to get as far as he did.

"He did not seem to feel the failure of his expedition. All that was lost in the happiness of getting back alive to this woman with whom he was in love. He had been three days alone before we found him, and in those three days, while he waited for death, he had thought of nothing but that he would never see her again. He had resigned himself to this, had given up all hope, and our coming seemed like a miracle to him. I have read about men in love, I have seen it on the stage, I have seen it in real life, but I never saw a man so grateful to God and so happy and so insane over a woman as this man was. He raved about her when he was feverish, and he talked and talked to me about her when he was in his senses. The porters could not understand him, and he found me sympathetic, I suppose, or else he did not care, and only wanted to speak of her to some one, and so he told me the story over and over again as I walked beside the litter, or as we sat by the fire at night.

"She must have been a very remarkable girl. He had met her first the year before, on one of the Italian steamers that ply from New York to Gibraltar. She was traveling with her father, who was an invalid going to Tangier for his health; from Tangier they were to go on up to Nice and Cannes, and in the spring to Paris and on to London for this season just over. The man was going from Gibraltar to Zanzibar, and then on into the Congo. They had met the first night out; they had separated thirteen days later at Gibraltar, and in that

time the girl had fallen in love with him, and had promised to marry him if he would let her, for he was very proud. He had to be. He had absolutely nothing to offer her. She is very well known at home. I mean her family is: they have lived in New York from its first days, and they are very rich. The girl had lived a life as different from his as the life of a girl in society must be from that of a vagabond. He had been an engineer, a newspaper correspondent, an officer in a Chinese army, and had built bridges in South America, and led their little revolutions there, and had seen service on the desert in the French army of Algiers. He had no home or nationality even, for he had left America when he was sixteen; he had no family, had saved no money, and was trusting everything to the success of this expedition into Africa to make him known and to give him position.

"It was the story of Othello and Desdemona over again. His blackness lay from her point of view, or rather would have lain from the point of view of her friends, in the fact that he was as helplessly ineligible a young man as a cowboy. And he really had lived a life of which he had no great reason to be proud. He had existed entirely for excitement; nothing he had done had counted for much except his bridges. They are still standing. But the things he had written are lost in the columns of the daily papers. The soldiers he had fought with knew him only as a man who cared more for the fighting than for what the fighting was about, and he had been as ready to write on one side as to fight on the other. He was a rolling stone, and had been a rolling stone from the time he was sixteen and had run away to sea, up to the day he had met this girl, when he was

just thirty. Yet you can see how such a man would attract a young, impressionable girl, who had met only those men whose actions are bounded by the courts of law or Wall Street, or the younger set. She had gone through life as some people go through picture-galleries, with their catalogues marked at the best pictures. She knew nothing of the little fellows whose work was skied, who were trying to be known, who were not of her world, but who toiled and prayed and hoped to be famous. This man came into her life suddenly with his stories of adventure and strange people and strange places, of things done for the love of doing them and not for the reward or reputation, and he bewildered her at first, I suppose, and then fascinated, and then won her.

"You can imagine how it was, these two walking the deck together during the day, or sitting side by side when the night came on, the ocean stretched before them. The daring of his present undertaking, the absurd glamour that is thrown over those who have gone into that strange country from which some travelers return, and the picturesqueness of his past life. It is no wonder the girl made too much of him. I do not think he knew what was coming. He did not pose before her. I am quite sure, from what I knew of him, that he did not. Indeed, I believe him when he said that he had fought against the more than interest she had begun to show for him. He was the sort of man women care for, but they had not been of this woman's class or caliber. It came to him like a sign from the heavens. It was as if a goddess had stooped to him. He told her when they separated that if he succeeded—if he opened this un-

known country, if he was rewarded as they had promised to reward him—he might dare to come to her; and she called him her knight-errant, and gave him her chain and locket to wear, and told him whether he failed or succeeded it meant nothing to her, and that her life was his while it lasted, and her soul as well.

"I think," Gordon said, stopping abruptly, with an air of careful consideration, "that those were her words as he repeated them to me."

He raised his eyes thoughtfully toward the face of the girl opposite, and then glanced past her, as if he were trying to recall the words the man had used. The fine, beautiful face of the woman was white and drawn around the lips, and she gave a quick, appealing glance at her hostess, as if she would beg to be allowed to go. But Mrs. Trevelyan and her guests were watching Gordon or toying with the things in front of them. The dinner had been served, and not even the soft movements of the servants interrupted the young man's story.

"You can imagine a man," Gordon went on, more lightly, "finding a hansom cab slow when he is riding from the station to see the woman he loves; but imagine this man urging himself and the rest of us to hurry when we were in the heart of Africa, with six months' travel in front of us before we could reach the first limits of civilization. That is what this man did. When he was still on his litter he used to toss and turn, and abuse the bearers and porters and myself because we moved so slowly. When we stopped for the night he would chafe and fret at the delay; and when the morning came he was the first to wake, if he slept at all, and

eager to push on. When at last he was able to walk, he worked himself into a fever again, and it was only when Royce warned him that he would kill himself if he kept on that he submitted to be carried, and forced himself to be patient.

"And all the time the poor devil kept saying how unworthy he was of her, how miserably he had wasted his years, how unfitted he was for the great happiness which had come into his life. I suppose every man says that when he is in love; very properly, too; but the worst of it was, in this man's case, that it was so very true. He was unworthy of her in everything but his love for her. It used to frighten me to see how much he cared. Well, we got out of it at last, and reached Alexandria, and saw white faces once more and heard women's voices, and the strain and fear of failure were over, and we could breathe again. I was quite ready enough to push on to London, but we had to wait a week for the steamer, and during that time that man made my life miserable. He had done so well, and would have done so much more if he had had my equipment, that I tried to see that he received all the credit due him. But he would have none of the public receptions, and the audience with the Khedive, or any of the fuss they made over us. He only wanted to get back to her. He spent the days on the quay watching them load the steamer, and counting the hours until she was to sail; and even at night he would leave the first bed he had slept in for six months, and would come into my room and ask me if I would not sit up and talk with him until daylight. You see, after he had given up all thought of her, and believed himself about to die without seeing her

again, it made her all the dearer, I suppose, and made him all the more fearful of losing her again.

"He became very quiet as soon as we were really under way, and Royce and I hardly knew him for the same man. He would sit in silence in his steamer-chair for hours, looking out at the sea and smiling to himself, and sometimes, for he was still very weak and feverish, the tears would come to his eyes and run down his cheeks. 'This is the way we would sit,' he said to me one night, 'with the dark purple sky and the strange Southern stars over our heads, and the rail of the boat rising and sinking below the line of the horizon. And I can hear her voice, and I try to imagine she is still sitting there, as she did the last night out, when I held her hands between mine.' " Gordon paused a moment, and then went on more slowly: "I do not know whether it was that the excitement of the journey overland had kept him up or not, but as we went on he became much weaker and slept more, until Royce became anxious and alarmed about him. But he did not know it himself; he had grown so sure of his recovery then that he did not understand what the weakness meant. He fell off into long spells of sleep or unconsciousness, and woke only to be fed, and would then fall back to sleep again. And in one of these spells of unconsciousness he died. He died within two days of land. He had no home and no country and no family, as I told you, and we buried him at sea. He left nothing behind him, for the very clothes he wore were those we had given him—nothing but the locket and the chain which he had told me to take from his neck when he died."

Gordon's voice had grown very cold and hard. He

stopped and ran his fingers down into his pocket and pulled out a little leather bag. The people at the table watched him in silence as he opened it and took out a dull silver chain with a gold heart hanging from it.

"This is it," he said, gently. He leaned across the table, with his eyes fixed on those of the American girl, and dropped the chain in front of her. "Would you like to see it?" he said.

The rest moved curiously forward to look at the little heap of gold and silver as it lay on the white cloth. But the girl, with her eyes half closed and her lips pressed together, pushed it on with her hand to the man who sat next her, and bowed her head slightly, as though it was an effort for her to move at all. The wife of the Austrian Minister gave a little sigh of relief.

"I should say your story did end badly, Mr. Gordon," she said. "It is terribly sad, and so unnecessarily so."

"I don't know," said Lady Arbuthnot, thoughtfully —"I don't know; it seems to me it was better. As Mr. Gordon says, the man was hardly worthy of her. A man should have something more to offer a woman than love; it is a woman's prerogative to be loved. Any number of men may love her; it is nothing to their credit: they cannot help themselves."

"Well," said General Kent, "if all true stories turn out as badly as that one does, I will take back what I said against those the story-writers tell. I prefer the ones Anstey and Jerome make up. I call it a most unpleasant story."

"But it isn't finished yet," said Gordon, as he leaned over and picked up the chain and locket. "There is still a little more."

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" said the wife of the Austrian Minister, eagerly. "But then," she added, "you can't make it any better. You cannot bring the man back to life."

"No," said Gordon, "but I can make it a little worse."

"Ah, I see," said Phillips, with a story-teller's intuition—"the girl."

"The first day I reached London I went to her banker's and got her address," continued Gordon. "And I wrote, saying I wanted to see her, but before I could get an answer I met her the next afternoon at a garden-party. At least I did not meet her; she was pointed out to me. I saw a very beautiful girl surrounded by a lot of men, and asked who she was, and found out it was the woman I had written to, the owner of the chain and locket; and I was also told that her engagement had just been announced to a young Englishman of family and position, who had known her only a few months, and with whom she was very much in love. So you see," he went on, smiling, "that it was better that he died, believing in her and in her love for him. Mr. Phillips, now, would have let him live to return and find her married; but Nature is kinder than writers of fiction, and quite as dramatic."

Phillips did not reply to this, and the general only shook his head doubtfully and said nothing. So Mrs. Trevelyan looked at Lady Arbuthnot, and the ladies rose and left the room. When the men had left them, a young girl went to the piano, and the other women seated themselves to listen; but Miss Egerton, saying that it was warm, stepped out through one of the high windows on to the little balcony that overhung the

garden. It was dark out there and cool, and the rumbling of the encircling city sounded as distant and as far off as the reflection seemed that its million lights threw up to the sky above. The girl leaned her face and bare shoulder against the rough stone wall of the house, and pressed her hands together, with her fingers locking and unlocking and her rings cutting through her gloves. She was trembling slightly, and the blood in her veins was hot and tingling. She heard the voices of the men as they entered the drawing-room, the momentary cessation of the music at the piano, and its renewal, and then a figure blocked the light from the window, and Gordon stepped out of it and stood in front of her with the chain and locket in his hand. He held it toward her, and they faced each other for a moment in silence.

"Will you take it now?" he said.

The girl raised her head, and drew herself up until she stood straight and tall before him.

"Have you not punished me enough?" she asked in a whisper. "Are you not satisfied? Was it brave? Was it manly? Is that what you have learned among your savages—to torture a woman?" She stopped with a quick sob of pain, and pressed her hands against her breast.

Gordon observed her, curiously, with cold consideration. "What of the sufferings of the man to whom you gave this?" he asked. "Why not consider him? What was your bad quarter of an hour at the table, with your friends around you, to the year he suffered danger and physical pain for you—for you, remember?"

The girl hid her face for a moment in her hands, and when she lowered them again her cheeks were wet and

her voice was changed and softer. "They told me he was dead," she said. "Then it was denied, and then the French papers told of it again, and with horrible detail, and how it happened."

Gordon took a step nearer her. "And does your love come and go with the editions of the daily papers?" he asked, fiercely. "If they say tomorrow morning that Arbuthnot is false to his principles or his party, that he is a bribe-taker, a man who sells his vote, will you believe them and stop loving him?" He gave a sharp exclamation of disdain. "Or will you wait," he went on, bitterly, "until the Liberal organs have had time to deny it? Is that the love, the life, and the soul you promised the man who—"

There was a soft step on the floor of the drawing-room, and the tall figure of young Arbuthnot appeared in the opening of the window as he looked doubtfully out into the darkness. Gordon took a step back into the light of the window, where he could be seen, and leaned easily against the railing of the balcony. His eyes were turned toward the street, and he noticed over the wall the top of a passing omnibus and the glow of the men's pipes who sat on it.

"Miss Egerton?" asked Arbuthnot, his eyes still blinded by the lights of the room he had left. "Is she here? Oh, is that you?" he said, as he saw the movement of the white dress. "I was sent to look for you," he said. "They were afraid something was wrong." He turned to Gordon, as if in explanation of his lover-like solicitude. "It has been rather a hard week, and it has kept one pretty well on the go all the time, and I thought Miss Egerton looked tired at dinner."

The moment he had spoken, the girl came toward him quickly, and put her arm inside of his, and took his hand.

He looked down at her wonderingly at this show of affection, and then drew her nearer, and said, gently, "You are tired, aren't you? I came to tell you that Lady Arbuthnot is going. She is waiting for you."

It struck Gordon, as they stood there, how handsome they were and how well suited. They took a step toward the window, and then the young nobleman turned and looked out at the pretty garden and up at the sky, where the moon was struggling against the glare of the city.

"It is very pretty and peaceful out here," he said, "is it not? It seems a pity to leave it. Good-night, Gordon, and thank you for your story." He stopped, with one foot on the threshold, and smiled. "And yet, do you know," he said, "I cannot help thinking you were guilty of doing just what you accused Phillips of doing. I somehow thought you helped the true story out a little. Now didn't you? Was it all just as you told it? Or am I wrong?"

"No," Gordon answered; "you are right. I did change it a little, in one particular."

"And what was that, may I ask?" said Arbuthnot.

"The man did not die," Gordon answered.

Arbuthnot gave a quick little sigh of sympathy. "Poor devil," he said, softly; "poor chap!" He moved his left hand over and touched the hand of the girl, as though to reassure himself of his own good fortune. Then he raised his eyes to Gordon's with a curious, puz-

zled look in them. "But then," he said, doubtfully, "if he is not dead, how did you come to get the chain?"

The girl's arm within his own moved slightly, and her fingers tightened their hold upon his hand.

"Oh," said Gordon, indifferently, "it did not mean anything to him, you see, when he found he had lost her, and it could not mean anything to her. It is of no value. It means nothing to any one—except, perhaps, to me."

THE MELANCHOLY HUSSAR

by Thomas Hardy

THOMAS HARDY

THOMAS HARDY was born in Dorset, England, where in gardens and horse-paddocks and woods and heath, he played as a boy. By the time he was four, he could read and tune a violin. And from the first, he combined friendliness and shyness. He liked people. During his early teens he eagerly joined in community singing and the festivities where he himself played jigs. But he liked being alone as well. He took long walks across the heath. He read for hours on end.

When he attended primary school at Dorchester, he did badly in his studies. His mother and a governess then tutored him. And there his schooling ended. For at sixteen he was apprenticed to an architect for whom he sketched old churches that were to be restored, work which took him to many localities. Architecture was a natural choice for Thomas Hardy, whose father was a master builder. But soon he was writing poetry. His family discouraged this and were glad when at twenty-two he entered the office of a London architect. But he could not give up his writing. And when he was twenty-seven, he permanently withdrew from architecture.

At first he received little encouragement. He could not get his poems published. His first novel was rejected. And not until he was thirty-four and had written *Far from the Madding Crowd* did people begin to recognize his genius. From that time, for more than twenty years, he devoted himself to fiction. To overcome the limitations of his schooling, he read and studied widely. He tirelessly strove to perfect his writing technique. And people continually absorbed him. Especially were those he had known in his own Dorset with him when he wrote. And we, today, reading *The Return of the Native, Tess of the d'Urbervilles, Jude the Obscure, The Woodlanders* and his shorter stories such as those in *Wessex Tales* of which *The Melancholy Hussar* is one, often feel that we know Tess and Jude and the rest more intimately than we do our own friends. His Wessex country, too, is very near and very real.

THE MELANCHOLY HUSSAR

By Thomas Hardy

I

HERE stretch the downs, high and breezy and green, absolutely unchanged since those eventful days. A plow has never disturbed the turf, and the sod that was uppermost then is uppermost now. Here stood the camp; here are distinct traces of the banks thrown up for the horses of the cavalry, and spots where the midden-heaps lay are still to be observed. At night, when I walk across the lonely place, it is impossible to avoid hearing, amid the scourings of the wind over the grass-bents and thistles, the old trumpet and bugle calls, the rattle of the halters; to help seeing rows of spectral tents and the *impedimenta* of the soldiery. From within the canvases come guttural syllables of foreign tongues, and broken songs of the fatherland; for they were mainly regiments of the King's German Legion that slept round the tent-poles hereabout at that time.

It was nearly ninety years ago. The British uniform of the period, with its immense epaulettes, queer cocked-hat, breeches, gaiters, ponderous cartridge-box, buckled shoes, and what not, would look strange and barbarous now. Ideas have changed; invention has followed invention. Soldiers were monumental objects then. A divinity

still hedged kings here and there; and war was considered a glorious thing.

Secluded old manor-houses and hamlets lie in the ravines and hollows among these hills, where a stranger had hardly ever been seen till the King chose to take the baths yearly at the sea-side watering-place a few miles to the south; as a consequence of which battalions descended in a cloud upon the open country around. Is it necessary to add that the echoes of many characteristic tales, dating from that picturesque time, still linger about here in more or less fragmentary form, to be caught by the attentive ear? Some of them I have repeated; most of them I have forgotten; one I have never repeated, and assuredly can never forget.

Phyllis told me the story with her own lips. She was then an old lady of seventy-five, and her auditor a lad of fifteen. She enjoined silence as to her share in the incident, till she should be "dead, buried, and forgotten." Her life was prolonged twelve years after the day of her narration, and she has now been dead nearly twenty. The oblivion which in her modesty and humility she courted for herself has only partially fallen on her, with the unfortunate result of inflicting an injustice upon her memory; since such fragments of her story as got abroad at the time, and have been kept alive ever since, are precisely those which are most unfavorable to her character.

It all began with the arrival of the York Hussars, one of the foreign regiments above alluded to. Before that day scarcely a soul had been seen near her father's house for weeks. When a noise like the brushing skirt of a

visitor was heard on the doorstep, it proved to be a scudding leaf; when a carriage seemed to be nearing the door, it was her father grinding his sickle on the stone in the garden for his favorite relaxation of trimming the box-tree borders to the plots. A sound like luggage thrown down from the coach was a gun far away at sea; and what looked like a tall man by the gate at dusk was a yew bush cut into a quaint and attenuated shape. There is no such solitude in country places now as there was in those old days.

Yet all the while King George and his court were at his favorite sea-side resort, not more than five miles off.

The daughter's seclusion was great, but beyond the seclusion of the girl lay the seclusion of the father. If her social condition was twilight, his was darkness. Yet he enjoyed his darkness, while her twilight oppressed her. Dr. Grove had been a professional man whose taste for lonely meditation over metaphysical questions had diminished his practice till it no longer paid him to keep it going; after which he had relinquished it and hired at a nominal rent the small, dilapidated, half farm, half manor-house of this obscure inland nook, to make a sufficiency of an income which in a town would have been inadequate for their maintenance. He stayed in his garden the greater part of the day, growing more and more irritable with the lapse of time, and the increasing perception that he had wasted his life in the pursuit of illusions. He saw his friends less and less frequently. Phyllis became so shy that if she met a stranger anywhere in her short rambles she felt ashamed at his

gaze, walked awkwardly, and blushed to her shoulders.

Yet Phyllis was discovered even here by an admirer, and her hand most unexpectedly asked in marriage.

The King, as aforesaid, was at the neighboring town, where he had taken up his abode at Gloucester Lodge; and his presence in the town naturally brought many county people thither. Among these idlers—many of whom professed to have connections and interests with the Court—was one Humphrey Gould, a bachelor; a personage neither young nor old; neither good-looking nor positively plain. Too steady-going to be "a buck," he was an approximately fashionable man of a mild type. This bachelor of thirty found his way to the village on the down: beheld Phyllis; made her father's acquaintance in order to make hers; and by some means or other she sufficiently inflamed his heart to lead him in that direction almost daily; till he became engaged to marry her.

As he was of an old local family, some of whose members were held in respect in the county, Phyllis, in bringing him to her feet, had accomplished what was considered a brilliant move for one in her constrained position. How she had done it was not quite known to Phyllis herself. In those days unequal marriages were regarded rather as a violation of the laws of nature than as a mere infringement of convention, the more modern view, and hence when Phyllis, of the watering-place *bourgeoisie,* was chosen by such a gentlemanly fellow, it was as if she were going to be taken to heaven, though perhaps the uninformed would have seen no great difference in the respective positions of the pair, the said Gould being as poor as a crow.

This pecuniary condition was his excuse—probably a true one—for postponing their union, and as the winter drew nearer, and the King departed for the season, Mr. Humphrey Gould set out for Bath, promising to return to Phyllis in a few weeks. The winter arrived, the date of his promise passed, yet Gould postponed his coming, on the ground that he could not very easily leave his father in the city of their sojourn, the elder having no other relative near him. Phyllis, though lonely in the extreme, was content. The man who had asked her in marriage was a desirable husband for her in many ways; her father highly approved of his suit; but this neglect of her was awkward, if not painful, for Phyllis. Love him in the true sense of the word she assured me she never did, but she had a genuine regard for him; admired a certain methodical and dogged way in which he sometimes took his pleasure; valued his knowledge of what the Court was doing, had done, or was about to do; and she was not without a feeling of pride that he had chosen her when he might have exercised a more ambitious choice.

But he did not come; and the spring developed. His letters were regular though formal; and it is not to be wondered that the uncertainty of her position, linked with the fact that there was not much passion in her thoughts of Humphrey, bred an indescribable dreariness in the heart of Phyllis Grove. The spring was soon summer, and the summer brought the King; but still no Humphrey Gould. All this while the engagement by letter was maintained intact.

At this point of time a golden radiance flashed in upon the lives of people here, and charged all youthful

thought with emotional interest. This radiance was the aforesaid York Hussars.

II

The present generation has probably but a very dim notion of the celebrated York Hussars of ninety years ago. They were one of the regiments of the King's German Legion, and (though they somewhat degenerated later on) their brilliant uniform, their splendid horses, and above all, their foreign air and mustachios (rare appendages then), drew crowds of admirers of both sexes wherever they went. These with other regiments had come to encamp on the downs and pastures, because of the presence of the King in the neighboring town.

The spot was high and airy, and the view extensive, commanding Portland—the Isle of Slingers—in front, and reaching to St. Aldhelm's Head eastward, and almost to the Start on the west.

Phyllis, though not precisely a girl of the village, was as interested as any of them in this military investment. Her father's home stood somewhat apart, and on the highest point of ground to which the lane ascended, so that it was almost level with the top of the church tower in the lower part of the parish. Immediately from the outside of the garden-wall the grass spread away to a great distance, and it was crossed by a path which came close to the wall. Ever since her childhood it had been Phyllis's pleasure to clamber up this fence and sit on the top—a feat not so difficult as it may seem, the walls in this district being built of rubble, without

mortar, so that there were plenty of crevices for small toes.

She was sitting up here one day, listlessly surveying the pasture without, when her attention was arrested by a solitary figure walking along the path. It was one of the renowned German Hussars, and he moved onward with his eyes on the ground, and with the manner of one who wished to escape company. His head would probably have been bent like his eyes but for his stiff neck-gear. On nearer view she perceived that his face was marked with deep sadness. Without observing her, he advanced by the footpath till it brought him almost immediately under the wall.

Phyllis was much surprised to see a fine, tall soldier in such a mood as this. Her theory of the military, and of the York Hussars in particular (derived entirely from hearsay, for she had never talked to a soldier in her life), was that their hearts were as gay as their accouterments.

At this moment the Hussar lifted his eyes and noticed her on her perch, the white muslin neckerchief which covered her shoulders and neck where left bare by her low gown, and her white raiment in general, showing conspicuously in the bright sunlight of this summer day. He blushed a little at the suddenness of the encounter, and without halting a moment from his pace passed on.

All that day the foreigner's face haunted Phyllis; its aspect was so striking, so handsome, and his eyes were so blue, and sad, and abstracted. It was perhaps only natural that on some following day at the same hour

she should look over that wall again, and wait till he had passed a second time. On this occasion he was reading a letter, and at the sight of her his manner was that of one who had half expected or hoped to discover her. He almost stopped, smiled, and made a courteous salute. The end of the meeting was that they exchanged a few words. She asked him what he was reading, and he readily informed her that he was re-perusing letters from his mother in Germany; he did not get them often, he said, and was forced to read the old ones a great many times. This was all that passed at the present interview, but others of the same kind followed.

Phyllis used to say that his English, though not good, was quite intelligible to her, so that their acquaintance was never hindered by difficulties of speech. Whenever the subject became too delicate, subtle, or tender, for such words of English as were at his command, the eyes no doubt helped out the tongue, and—though this was later on—the lips helped out the eyes. In short this acquaintance, unguardedly made, and rash enough on her part, developed and ripened. Like Desdemona, she pitied him, and learnt his history.

His name was Matthäus Tina, and Saarbrück his native town, where his mother was still living. His age was twenty-two, and he had already risen to the grade of corporal, though he had not long been in the army. Phyllis used to assert that no such refined or well-educated young man could have been found in the ranks of the purely English regiments, some of these foreign soldiers having rather the graceful manner and presence of our native officers than of our rank and file.

She by degrees learnt from her foreign friend a circumstance about himself and his comrades which

AT THIS MOMENT THE HUSSAR LIFTED HIS EYES

Phyllis would least have expected of the York Hussars. So far from being as gay as its uniform, the regiment was pervaded by a dreadful melancholy, a chronic homesickness, which depressed many of the men to such an extent that they could hardly attend to their drill. The worst sufferers were the younger soldiers who had not been over here long. Their bodies were here, but their hearts and minds were always far away in their dear fatherland, of which—brave men and stoical as they were in many ways—they would speak with tears in their eyes. One of the worst of the sufferers from this home-woe, as he called it in his own tongue, was Matthäus Tina, whose dreamy musing nature felt the gloom of exile still more intensely from the fact that he had left a lonely mother at home with nobody to cheer her.

Though Phyllis, touched by all this, and interested in his history, did not disdain her soldier's acquaintance, she declined (according to her own account, at least) to permit the young man to overstep the line of mere friendship for a long while—as long, indeed, as she considered herself likely to become the possession of another; though it is probable that she had lost her heart to Matthäus before she was herself aware. The stone wall of necessity made anything like intimacy difficult; and he had never ventured to come, or to ask to come, inside the garden, so that all their conversation had been overtly conducted across this boundary.

III

But news reached the village from a friend of Phyllis's father concerning Mr. Humphrey Gould, her remark-

ably cool and patient betrothed. This gentleman had been heard to say in Bath that he considered his overtures to Miss Phyllis Grove to have reached only the stage of a half-understanding; and in view of his enforced absence on his father's account, who was too great an invalid now to attend to his affairs, he thought it best that there should be no definite promise as yet on either side. He was not sure, indeed, that he might not cast his eyes elsewhere.

This account—though only a piece of hearsay, and as such entitled to no absolute credit—tallied so well with the infrequency of his letters and their lack of warmth, that Phyllis did not doubt its truth for one moment; and from that hour she felt herself free to bestow her heart as she should choose. Not so her father; he declared the whole story to be a fabrication. He had known Mr. Gould's family from his boyhood; and if there was one proverb which expressed the matrimonial aspect of that family well, it was "Love me little, love me long." Humphrey was an honorable man, who would not think of treating his engagement so lightly. "Do you wait in patience," he said; "all will be right enough in time."

From these words Phyllis at first imagined that her father was in correspondence with Mr. Gould; and her heart sank within her; for in spite of her original intentions she had been relieved to hear that her engagement had come to nothing. But she presently learnt that her father had heard no more of Humphrey Gould than she herself had done; while he would not write and address her affianced directly on the subject, lest it

should be deemed an imputation on that bachelor's honor.

"You want an excuse for encouraging one or other of those foreign fellows to flatter you with his unmeaning attentions," her father exclaimed, his mood having of late been a very unkind one towards her. "I see more than I say. Don't you ever set foot outside that garden-fence without my permission. If you want to see the camp I'll take you myself some Sunday afternoon."

Phyllis had not the smallest intention of disobeying him in her actions, but she assumed herself to be independent with respect to her feelings. She no longer checked her fancy for the Hussar, though she was far from regarding him as her lover in the serious sense in which an Englishman might have been regarded as such. The young foreign soldier was almost an ideal being to her, with none of the appurtenances of an ordinary house-dweller; one who had descended she knew not whence, and would disappear she knew not whither; the subject of a fascinating dream—no more.

They met continually now—mostly at dusk—during the brief interval between the going down of the sun and the minute at which the last trumpet-call summoned him to his tent. Perhaps her manner had become less restrained latterly; at any rate that of the Hussar was so; he had grown more tender every day, and at parting after these hurried interviews she reached down her hand from the top of the wall that he might press it. One evening he held it such a while that she exclaimed, "The wall is white, and somebody in the field may see your shape against it!"

He lingered so long that night that it was with the greatest difficulty that he could run across the intervening stretch of ground and enter the camp in time. On the next occasion of his awaiting her she did not appear in her usual place at the usual hour. His disappointment was unspeakably keen; he remained staring blankly at the spot, like a man in a trance. The trumpets and tattoo sounded, and still he did not go.

She had been delayed purely by an accident. When she arrived she was anxious because of the lateness of the hour, having heard as well as he the sounds denoting the closing of the camp. She implored him to leave immediately.

"No," he said gloomily. "I shall not go in yet—the moment you come—I have thought of your coming all day."

"But you may be disgraced at being after time?"

"I don't mind that. I should have disappeared from the world some time ago if it had not been for two persons—my beloved, here, and my mother in Saarbrück. I hate the army. I care more for a minute of your company than for all the promotion in the world."

Thus he stayed and talked to her, and told her interesting details of his native place, and incidents of his childhood, till she was in a simmer of distress at his recklessness in remaining. It was only because she insisted on bidding him good-night and leaving the wall that he returned to his quarters.

The next time that she saw him he was without the stripes that had adorned his sleeve. He had been broken to the level of private for his lateness that night; and as Phyllis considered herself to be the cause of his dis-

grace her sorrow was great. But the position was now reversed; it was his turn to cheer her.

"Don't grieve, meine Liebliche!" he said. "I have got a remedy for whatever comes. First, even supposing I regain my stripes, would your father allow you to marry a non-commissioned officer in the York Hussars?"

She flushed. This practical step had not been in her mind in relation to such an unrealistic person as he was; and a moment's reflection was enough for it. "My father would not—certainly would not," she answered unflinchingly. "It cannot be thought of! My dear friend, please do forget me: I fear I am ruining you and your prospects!"

"Not at all!" said he. "You are giving this country of yours just sufficient interest to me to make me care to keep alive in it. If my dear land were here also, and my old parent, with you, I could be happy as I am, and would do my best as a soldier. But it is not so. And now listen. This is my plan. That you go with me to my own country, and be my wife there, and live there with my mother and me. I am not a Hanoverian, as you know, though I entered the army as such; my country is by the Saar, and is at peace with France, and if I were once in it I should be free."

"But how get there?" she asked. Phyllis had been rather amazed than shocked at his proposition. Her position in her father's house was growing irksome and painful in the extreme; his parental affection seemed to be quite dried up. She was not a native of the village, like all the joyous girls around her; and in some way Matthäus Tina had infected her with his own passionate longing for his country, and mother, and home.

"But how?" she repeated, finding that he did not answer. "Will you buy your discharge?"

"Ah, no," he said. "That's impossible in these times. No; I came here against my will; why should I not escape? Now is the time, as we shall soon be striking camp, and I might see you no more. This is my scheme. I will ask you to meet me on the highway two miles off, on some calm night next week that may be appointed. You will not fly alone with me, for I will bring with me my devoted young friend Christoph, an Alsatian, who has lately joined the regiment, and who has agreed to assist in this enterprise. We shall have come from yonder harbor, where we shall have examined the boats, and found one suited to our purpose. Christoph has already a chart of the Channel, and we will then go to the harbor, and at midnight cut the boat from her moorings, and row away round the point out of sight; and by the next morning we are on the coast of France, near Cherbourg. The rest is easy, for I have saved money for the land journey, and can get a change of clothes. I will write to my mother, who will meet us on the way."

He added details in reply to her inquiries, which left no doubt in Phyllis's mind of the feasibility of the undertaking. But its magnitude almost appalled her; and it is questionable if she would ever have gone further in the wild adventure if, on entering the house that night, her father had not accosted her in the most significant terms.

"How about the York Hussars?" he said.

"They are still at the camp; but they are soon going away, I believe."

"It is useless for you to attempt to cloak your actions

in that way. You have been meeting one of those fellows; you have been seen walking with him. I have made up my mind—don't speak a word till I have done, please!—I have made up my mind that you shall stay here no longer while they are on the spot. You shall go to your aunt's."

It was useless for her to protest that she had never taken a walk with any soldier or man under the sun except himself. Her protestations were feeble, too, for though he was not literally correct in his assertion, he was virtually only half in error.

The house of her father's sister was a prison to Phyllis. She had quite recently undergone experience of its gloom; and when her father went on to direct her to pack what would be necessary for her to take, her heart died within her. In after years she never attempted to excuse her conduct during this week of agitation; but the result of her self-communing was that she decided to join in the scheme of her lover and his friend, and fly to the country which he had colored with such lovely hues in her imagination. She always said that the one feature in his proposal which overcame her hesitation was the obvious straightforwardness of his intentions. He showed himself to be so virtuous and kind; he treated her with a respect to which she had never before been accustomed; and she was braced to the obvious risks of the voyage by her confidence in him.

IV

It was on a soft, dark evening of the following week that they engaged in the adventure. Tina was to meet

her at a point in the highway at which the lane to the village branched off. Christoph was to go ahead of them to the harbor where the boat lay, row it round the Nothe—or Look-out as it was called in those days—and pick them up on the other side of the promontory, which they were to reach by crossing the harbor-bridge on foot, and climbing over the Look-out hill.

As soon as her father had ascended to his room she left the house, and, bundle in hand, proceeded at a trot along the lane. At such an hour not a soul was afoot anywhere in the village, and she reached the junction of the lane with the highway unobserved. Here she took up her position in the obscurity formed by the angle of a fence, whence she could discern every one who approached along the turnpike-road, without being herself seen.

She had not remained thus waiting for her lover longer than a minute—though from the tension of her nerves the lapse of even that short time was trying—when, instead of the expected footsteps, the stage-coach could be heard descending the hill. She knew that Tina would not show himself till the road was clear, and waited impatiently for the coach to pass. Nearing the corner where she was it slackened speed, and, instead of going by as usual, drew up within a few yards of her. A passenger alighted, and she heard his voice. It was Humphrey Gould's.

He had brought a friend with him, and luggage. The luggage was deposited on the grass, and the coach went on its route to the royal watering-place.

"I wonder where that young man is with the horse and trap?" said her former admirer to his companion.

"I hope we shan't have to wait here long. I told him half-past nine o'clock precisely."

"Have you got her present safe?"

"Phyllis's? Oh, yes. It is in this trunk. I hope it will please her."

"Of course it will. What woman would not be pleased with such a handsome peace-offering?"

"Well—she deserves it. I've treated her rather badly. But she has been in my mind these last two days much more than I should care to confess to everybody. Ah, well; I'll say no more about that."

More words in the same strain were casually dropped as the two men waited; words which revealed to her, as by a sudden illumination, the enormity of her conduct. The conversation was at length cut off by the arrival of the man with the vehicle. The luggage was placed in it, and they mounted, and were driven on in the direction from which she had just come.

Phyllis was so conscience-stricken that she was at first inclined to follow them; but a moment's reflection led her to feel that it would only be bare justice to Matthäus to wait till he arrived, and explain candidly that she had changed her mind—difficult as the struggle would be when she stood face to face with him. She bitterly reproached herself for having believed reports which represented Humphrey Gould as false to his engagement, when, from what she now heard from his own lips, she gathered that he had been living full of trust in her. But she knew well enough who had won her love. Without him her life seemed a dreary prospect, yet the more she looked at his proposal the more she feared to accept it—so wild as it was, so vague, so

venturesome. She had promised Humphrey Gould, and it was only his assumed faithlessness which had led her to treat that promise as nought. His solicitude in bringing her these gifts touched her; her promise must be kept, and esteem must take the place of love. She would preserve her self-respect. She would stay at home, and marry him, and suffer.

Phyllis had thus braced herself to an exceptional fortitude when, a few minutes later, the outline of Matthäus Tina appeared behind a field-gate, over which he lightly leapt as she stepped forward. There was no evading it, he pressed her to his breast.

"It is the first and last time!" she wildly thought as she stood encircled by his arms.

How Phyllis got through the terrible ordeal of that night she could never clearly recollect. She always attributed her success in carrying out her resolve to her lover's honor, for as soon as she declared to him in feeble words that she had changed her mind, and felt that she could not, dared not, fly with him, he forbore to urge her, grieved as he was at her decision. Unscrupulous pressure on his part, seeing how romantically she had become attached to him, would no doubt have turned the balance in his favor. But he did nothing to tempt her unduly or unfairly.

On her side, fearing for his safety, she begged him to remain. This, he declared, could not be. "I cannot break faith with my friend," said he. Had he stood alone he would have abandoned his plan. But Christoph, with the boat and compass and chart, was waiting on the shore; the tide would soon turn; his mother had been warned of his coming; go he must.

Many precious minutes were lost while he tarried, unable to tear himself away. Phyllis held to her resolve, though it cost her many a bitter pang. At last they parted, and he went down the hill. Before his footsteps had quite died away she felt a desire to behold at least his outline once more, and running noiselessly after him regained view of his diminishing figure. For one moment she was sufficiently excited to be on the point of rushing forward and linking her fate with his. But she could not. The courage which at the critical instant failed Cleopatra of Egypt could scarcely be expected of Phyllis Grove.

A dark shape, similar to his own, joined him in the highway. It was Christoph, his friend. She could see no more; they had hastened on in the direction of the town and harbor, four miles ahead. With a feeling akin to despair she turned and slowly pursued her way homeward.

Tattoo sounded in the camp; but there was no camp for her now. It was as dead as the camp of the Assyrians after the passage of the Destroying Angel.

She noiselessly entered the house, seeing nobody, and went to bed. Grief, which kept her awake at first, ultimately wrapped her in a heavy sleep. The next morning her father met her at the foot of the stairs.

"Mr. Gould is come!" he said triumphantly.

Humphrey was staying at the inn, and had already called to enquire for her. He had brought her a present of a very handsome looking-glass in a frame of *repoussé* silverwork, which her father held in his hand. He had promised to call again in the course of an hour, to ask Phyllis to walk with him.

Pretty mirrors were rarer in country-houses at that day than they are now, and the one before her won Phyllis's admiration. She looked into it, saw how heavy her eyes were, and endeavored to brighten them. She was in that wretched state of mind which leads a woman to move mechanically onward in what she conceives to be her allotted path. Mr. Humphrey had, in his undemonstrative way, been adhering all along to the old understanding; it was for her to do the same, and to say not a word of her own lapse. She put on her bonnet and tippet, and when he arrived at the hour named she was at the door awaiting him.

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Phyllis thanked him for his beautiful gift; but the talking was soon entirely on Humphrey's side as they walked along. He told her of the latest movements of the world of fashion—a subject which she willingly discussed to the exclusion of anything more personal—and his measured language helped to still her disquieted heart and brain. Had not her own sadness been what it was she must have observed his embarrassment. At last he abruptly changed the subject.

"I am glad you are pleased with my little present," he said. "The truth is that I brought it to propitiate 'ee, and to get you to help me out of a mighty difficulty."

It was inconceivable to Phyllis that this independent bachelor—whom she admired in some respects—could have a difficulty.

"Phyllis—I'll tell you my secret at once; for I have a monstrous secret to confide before I can ask your

counsel. The case is, then, that I am married: yes, I have privately married a dear young belle; and if you knew her, and I hope you will, you would say everything in her praise. But she is not quite the one that my father would have chose for me—you know the paternal idea as well as I—and I have kept it secret. There will be a terrible noise, no doubt; but I think that with your help I may get over it. If you would only do me this good turn—when I have told my father, I mean—say that you never could have married me, you know, or something of that sort—'pon my life it will help to smooth the way vastly. I am so anxious to win him round to my point of view, and not to cause any estrangement."

What Phyllis replied she scarcely knew, or how she counseled him as to his unexpected situation. Yet the relief that his announcement brought her was perceptible. To have confided her trouble in return was what her aching heart longed to do; and had Humphrey been a woman she would instantly have poured out her tale. But to him she feared to confess; and there was a real reason for silence, till a sufficient time had elapsed to allow her lover and his comrade to get out of harm's way.

As soon as she reached home again she sought a solitary place, and spent the time in half regretting that she had not gone away, and in dreaming over the meetings with Matthäus Tina from their beginning to their end. In his own country, amongst his own countrywomen, he would possibly soon forget her, even to her very name.

Her listlessness was such that she did not go out of

the house for several days. There came a morning which broke in fog and mist, behind which the dawn could be discerned in greenish gray; and the outlines of the tents, and the rows of horses at the ropes. The smoke from the canteen fires drooped heavily.

The spot at the bottom of the garden where she had been accustomed to climb the wall to meet Matthäus was the only inch of English ground in which she took any interest; and in spite of the disagreeable haze prevailing she walked out there till she reached the well-known corner. Every blade of grass was weighted with little liquid globes, and slugs and snails had crept out upon the plots. She could hear the usual faint noises from the camp, and in the other direction the trot of farmers on the road to the town, for it was market-day. She observed that her frequent visits to this corner had quite trodden down the grass in the angle of the wall, and left marks of garden soil on the stepping-stones by which she had mounted to look over the top. Seldom having gone there till dusk, she had not considered that her traces might be visible by day. Perhaps it was these which had revealed her trysts to her father.

While she paused in melancholy regard, she fancied that the customary sounds from the tents were changing their character. Indifferent as Phyllis was to camp doings now, she mounted by the steps to the old place. What she beheld at first awed and perplexed her; then she stood rigid, her fingers hooked to the wall, her eyes staring out of her head, and her face as if hardened to stone.

On the open green stretching before her all the regi-

ments in the camp were drawn up in line. The unwonted sounds which she had noticed came from an advancing procession. It consisted of the band of the York Hussars playing a dead march; next two soldiers of that regiment in a mourning coach, guarded on each side, and accompanied by two priests. Behind came a crowd of rustics who had been attracted by the event. The melancholy procession marched along the front of the line, and returned to the center, where the two condemned men were blindfolded; a few minutes' pause was now given, while they prayed.

A firing-party of twenty-four men stood ready with leveled carbines. The commanding officer, who had his sword drawn, waved it through some cuts of the sword-exercise till he reached the downward stroke, whereat the firing party discharged their volley. The two victims fell, one upon his face across his coffin, the other backwards.

As the volley resounded there arose a shriek from the wall of Dr. Grove's garden, and some one fell down inside; but nobody among the spectators without noticed it at the time. The two executed Hussars were Matthäus Tina and his friend Christoph.

Meanwhile Dr. Grove, attracted by the noise of the volley, had rushed out into his garden, where he saw his daughter lying motionless against the wall. She was taken indoors, but it was long before she recovered consciousness; and for weeks they despaired of her reason.

It transpired that the luckless deserters from the York Hussars had cut the boat from her moorings in the adjacent harbor, according to their plan, and, with two

other comrades who were smarting under ill-treatment from their colonel, had sailed in safety across the Channel. But mistaking their bearings they steered into Jersey, thinking that island the French coast. Here they were perceived to be deserters, and delivered up to the authorities. Matthäus and Christoph interceded for the other two at the court-martial, saying that it was entirely by the former's representations that these were induced to go. Their sentence was accordingly commuted to flogging, the death punishment being reserved for their leaders.

The visitor to the well-known old Georgian watering-place, who may care to ramble to the neighboring village under the hills, and examine the register of burials, will there find two entries in these words:—

"Matth: Tina (Corpl.) in His Majesty's Regmt. of York Hussars, and Shot for Desertion, was Buried June 30, 1801 aged 22 years. Born in the town of Saarbruk, Germany.

"Christoph Bless, belonging to His Majesty's Regmt. of York Hussars, who was Shot for Desertion, was Buried June 30th, 1801, aged 22 years. Born at Lothaargen, Alsatia."

Their graves were dug at the back of the little church, near the wall. There is no memorial to mark the spot, but Phyllis pointed it out to me. While she lived she used to keep their mounds neat; but now they are overgrown with nettles, and sunk nearly flat. The older villagers, however, who know of the episode from their parents, still recollect the place where the soldiers lie. Phyllis lies near.

LAND'S END

by Wilbur Daniel Steele

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE has lived in many places—in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he was born; in Berlin, Germany, where he attended kindergarten; in Denver, Colorado, where his father was president of the University of Denver; in Boston; in Paris; in Italy; in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and in Charleston, South Carolina. He has traveled in the West Indies, North Africa and Europe. And the stories that he writes today are about those who live in near and far corners of the earth.

His Colorado home overflowed with books. But Wilbur Daniel Steele did not give them first place during his school years. "My chief scholastic honors," he writes, "were taken in football, baseball, track, basketball and tennis. I was captain of the football, basketball and track teams, but in all fairness should add that the college was small and that actually I was usually the last man taken for the team!"

From Denver he went to Boston to study in the Museum of Fine Arts; next, Paris and the *Académie Julian,* with his dream of being an artist. Then, Italy and days under Nordfeldt, the etcher. His first stories were written, as he says, "by way of playing hookey from art." And he had no thought of becoming primarily a writer. Gradually, however, the people in his stories absorbed him more than did those in his pictures. Those who read the stories encouraged him to continue. Until, at last, he definitely turned from his art to his writing.

But the many days as an art student were not wasted. With the eye of the painter skilled in observing smallest details, Wilbur Daniel Steele sees pictures wherever he goes. He sees, he remembers and, writing, paints with vivid words what he has seen and known. He is now ranked as one of the foremost of our American writers of short stories. *Land's End,* which takes its title from this story, *The Shame Dance, Urkey Island* and *The Man who Saw Through Heaven* are among his books of short stories, and he is interested, as well, in writing plays.

LAND'S END

By Wilbur Daniel Steele

THE year was dying; day was dying; there was a tale that the woman in the house on the last hill was dying. It came in from the sea, and like the sea it knew nothing of life or death. It seemed remote; one heard it high up there in the air, a continuous voice across the heavens. Papers tumbled in the cobbled runways of Barnham Head Village; outriders of the wind flattened the skirts of heavy fishwives, made ribbons of the supper smoke from the thirty chimneys, and rattled the little panes that flared crimson with the sunset across the marshes. Now and then the house on the last hill, careening under the volleys, settled microscopically to the northeast as it had been settling a hundred years, and the sand spattering across the polished clapboards made a sound within like a newspaper crumpled in the hand.

It seemed fitting that this should be the last house in the world. There was about the hollow thing something so wasted and blighted, and yet unconquerable, like an enduring disaster.

There was a long, loose-boarded porch with pillars across the front of the house and above it a second porch open to the sky, serving the "plastered tenement" advertised on a sign-board flapping beside the gate. Summer visitors sometimes took the plastered tenement—the families of small tradesmen in towns at the head of the cape: people too poor to go elsewhere. They never

stayed long, and they never came back another season because they could not bear the tragic beauty of the outlook from that hilltop—the ultimate decay of a continent. The sands were run, even with the door-step; after that the land was no longer like itself, but already half in the grip of the ocean. Tide channels webbed the marshes; there were innumerable little pools, clean-rimmed as bath-tubs, deep, clear, filled with tiny, silvery fish; the place was rotten with quicksands. A narrow thread of breakwater stretching across it seemed like the last, hopeless recourse of the beaten physician: the moribund land roused itself once at the end in a huddle of sand-bars, and then there was nothing but the ocean and a bell.

The woman on the bed in the plastered tenement was looking into the candle flame and listening to the bell: a faint, repeated note borne in the bosom of the wind. She had wanted the candle lit, although a shaft of pale magenta still flowed in through the western window to make a ghost of the wick.

She might be twenty-five years of age, or forty—it would be hard to say now. She was of slight figure, to judge by the head and shoulders propped against the pillows and the vague outlines folded into the bedclothes. Looking at her face, one saw only the eyes at first. Large, clear, quick-moving between the low-arched lids, brown almost to golden and yet carrying an illusion of great depth, all the vital aspirations seemed to have come to center there, and the replica of the draughty candle, flickering in either orb, seemed at home in them, as if they had been used to flame and wind. Save for a sanguine feather on either cheek-bone,

the rest of the face was glass white, the features tooled to a fineness so exquisite that they seemed transparent and almost luminous.

She was talking to herself.

"I've been so happy here with the sun and the stars and the wind and the bell. Sweet bell, so patient, so kind, calling to me, day in, day out! I wonder if the bell knows about me. . . . Mrs. Sparrow, where is the bell?"

Mrs. Sparrow, middle-aged, worn and fleshy, answered from her rocker in a shadowed corner:

"The bell, dearie? Why, it's out to the Head, dearie."

"The Head?"

"Yes. The end—b'yond the marshes, y'know. B'yond ever'thin', dearie."

"Oh! The end! So if I could go out to the end, then I could see the bell. I wonder, I wonder—"

"Hush, dearie!" Mrs. Sparrow got up, patting out her apron and glancing nervously at the bed from the corners of her eyes. "Now, now! Just be quiet, dearie. There! I hear Mr. Mendal coming up now." She was already busy with her shawl and bonnet, relieved by the footfalls beyond the door, ascending slowly and muffled by the crazy rockings of the house. "I hope y'll feel smarter 'n the mornin'," she cast over her shoulder, exactly as she had cast it each evening for nearly a month, and, avoiding the wistful negative from the bed, stepped out of the room and closed the door behind her.

On the landing she confronted Mr. Mendal.

"She says how her money's all gone," she announced in a worried undertone. "She 'xpected to go a week back, she says."

She would have liked to be an idealist, this Widow

Sparrow; she would have loved not to have to think of the money part. Looking at Mr. Mendal now, with his stooping shoulders mammoth in the blown candle-light and his face, kind and unharried, a sense of hopelessness came over her. Mr. Mendal would never understand.

"I know," she said. "But if you was t' have four to home, an' the oldest too young yet t' fish!" She peered up at him. " 'Tain't 's if I knew the first thin' about 'er—where she come from—if she's got folks or no!"

"Don't you worry about the money, Mother Sparrow." Mendal's voice was rich and quiet. "How does she seem tonight?"

"Oh, dear, 'bout the same. Waitin' to be took. I declare she don't seem t' worrit much, though. She begins t' talk queer, though—talkin' 'bout goin' out t' the Head an' the like. It gives me a start t' hear 'er."

"She's been out on the porch?"

"Yes, a while. I carried 'er in 'bout an hour ago. She don't seem t' care much what—"

"Yes, yes. Well, I guess that's all. Good-night, Mother Sparrow."

Entering the room, he drew the rocker from its corner and sat down beside the bed, leaning a little forward with his hands hanging between his knees.

"Well," he said, "and how are you tonight?"

"Ah, dear friend, dear friend, you know how I am —this last night."

He stared at his wrists.

"Pshaw! You've said that every night the past week."

"Yes, my time was up almost a week ago. I've stolen a week, Mendal—a week of sweetness."

Her eyes went back to the candles, two of them now,

on the wash-stand. Mendal's chin sank farther into his neck. Their shadows danced over the bare plaster beyond the bed, huge and without shape. Both seemed to be listening to the wind and the clattering shutters and the bell: both were thinking of what was to come.

The woman began again, her voice low and powerless and yet full of a kind of color.

"It's like a balcony here hung over the edge, beyond noise and hurry and naggings and heart-breaks, little loves, tiny hates; beyond time and space, Mendal: beyond everything but the bell and the end. I—I've been wondering—" She got herself out of that with a visible effort and drew one hand from beneath the bedclothes.

"I wonder if you would hold my hand, Mendal?" she asked, with the queerest white smile twisting her lips. He leaned forward awkwardly and covered the white hand with his own brown one.

"Mendal, I wonder if you know how—how—if you know what you've been to me. I must seem so weird to you down here at the end of things: you've always known everything so well, you people here—your neighbors, your plastered tenement, your marshes, your yesterday, your tomorrow. Dropping out of nowhere as I have, unexplained, nameless even, I must have seemed like a—like—"

"Like an angel." There was a curious harshness in the man's voice.

"Is that why you've been so good and never asked? I don't see how you could have been so good, Mendal, never once to have tried to pry or peep. It was raining that night. Oh, yes, I can remember how hard it rained. And you were driving along the road in your buggy in

the rain, thinking of—what were you thinking of, Mendal?"

"I was thinking how late it was."

"And then what did you say when you saw me in the road ahead, staggering along, drenched and crazy and ready to die?"

"I said, 'My God!' "

"Yes, I remember hearing your voice before I went down—other voices, too. Were there some men with you, Mendal?"

"Yes, some neighbors. They got out and walked."

"And you brought me up here! Why did you bring me up here, Mendal, instead of taking me on into the village?"

"The village is noisy sometimes when the fish come in; the carts on the cobbles, children playing, and all. And you were sick and frightened."

"Frightened! Oh, how terribly frightened, Mendal, at first. But not for a long time now—only peaceful and happy, watching the sunlight drift across the wall, listening to the bell out there at the last end, calling—"

Mendal got up suddenly to trim one of the candles which was guttering. After that he moved about the chamber, his heavy, square-toed boots clanking on the boards, his fingers twining behind his back, and his shadow skipping monstrously from corner to corner. He stood staring for a moment out of the window that had grown black; then he wheeled around abruptly.

"How would you like a little music tonight for a change?"

The woman started to shake her head, and then, seeing by his face how he wanted to, she smiled and nodded.

He left the room, to return after a few minutes carrying a phonograph, a black-enameled horn, and a handful of records.

"You see, we're not so countrified down here at the Head, after all. It's a great comfort; makes things more equal. I can sit down and listen to Caruso or Farnoe sing here as well as your man in New York City can. Now, here's one called the 'Mad Song' for instance—'Mad Song' from 'Lucia' it is."

It was Farnoe singing there in the shiny horn. The record was old and badly marred in places; and yet, with all that, perhaps that "Rose of the World" had never sung her "Mad Song" against a background like this tonight—against fitful candles in a rocking house, against the stark orchestration of the wind, the distracted sand pelting the clapboards, the voice of the bell remote and disembodied, like a lost sentinel, telling the breakers. At times the silver thread seemed to go out of the chamber, mount up through the roof, searching for something not to be found, and then, by and by, come back again to break its heart in play.

The woman, lying cheek in hand, did not once move her eyes from Mendal, who sat hunched on his elbows in a curiously relaxed posture, staring at the upper lip of the horn. The aria came to a close, and the needle whirred on untended in the blank.

"It seems queer to me," he dreamed aloud, "how anybody could make-believe like that; make a thing that isn't real so much more real than anything else. I suppose that's what they call being an artist."

"That isn't artistry!" The woman raised herself on an elbow. "That's not make-believe, as you call it. No,

no—that was Farnoe herself—inside—something she was searching for, a flame for her to play with. Remember, Mendal, when she sang for that record she had just—just— It was about Terry Kew."

"In the play?"

"In the flesh! It was perilous, singing that, Mendal. No one could have dreamed how perilous but I. I could —because—I am Mary Farnoe."

For a moment the man continued in the same posture, as though he had not heard, or, hearing, had failed to comprehend.

"Mendal! Look at me!"

He turned his head slowly.

"This is Mary Farnoe, here. Do you understand? This is 'The Beloved'; this is 'Rose of the World,' Mendal—*'Fleur d'Amour'—'Farnoe'!*"

Mendal's lips parted once or twice, but he seemed not to know what to say. He got up finally and stood with his hands behind his back.

"My house is honored," he stammered with an awkward bow. Then he continued to stare down at her till she cried at him in her strengthless voice:

"And still you don't ask me how I came here—why I came? Have I had to come to the end of the earth to find a man who would ask nothing of me? Sit down again! Nearer! There!

"I'll tell you, Mendal. Because I couldn't bear their watching and waiting and pretending; I couldn't bear their not knowing that *I* knew. Oh, Mendal, I couldn't look forward to the whisperings and telegrams and bulletins. I've amused the street all my life, Mendal—wasn't that enough? Must I die for them in the paper

each morning, along with their ball games and stocks and coffee? And then I was frightened too. Mendal, do you know what it is to be frightened?"

A faint color dyed her cheeks, like the sun seen through a shell. She raised herself higher on the pillow, and her voice grew stronger:

"If they'd only told me, Mendal! I knew they'd done something or other to me after I went to pieces at the Symphony that night, but they were so kind and made nothing of it. I had to get it from a hysterical, eavesdropping maid at the hotel. Three weeks to live! Mendal! Mendal! I who had loved life so, faithless as it had been!

"And then there was the train; the hot, bright, varnished cage rushing me away through the dark; the nurse in and out; little Blomberg in and out, puckering his fat forehead, smoking hard, trying for once in his life to be gay. Poor little Blomberg; I really think he had some sort of a queer affection for me. After all, I made him—the Great Manager. Norway was somewhere in the train, too, covering me for the A.P.—like a—a hanging, Mendal.

"They were taking me somewhere for a rest, Blomberg said. But why then the wire for Doctor Westcountry to meet us? Didn't they imagine I knew who Doctor Westcountry was, what he was? Wasn't the name Westcountry enough?

"They were all asleep, even the nurse. But how was I to sleep? The train was a nightmare. It smothered me. I got to thinking to whom I belonged. 'Am I Mary, or am I Farnoe?' I said over and over and over, out loud.

"The train stopped for something. I crept out. I had to have air. Another train from the opposite direc-

tion came in between me and my own. It was like the hand of God. I turned my back and started to run away along a road. I must have been quite out of my head with it all, for the train, I remember, turned down the road after me: I could hear it thundering through the trees behind me—the rain, I suppose. How far did I come, Mendal?"

"Five miles—or better."

"How could I? I don't remember it. There was a signpost under a lantern with three white fingers weeping for me, and there was a rowboat between two bushes on a hill, and there was a dog that trotted beside me for a while; I don't know how long. And by and by you were behind me, and that frightened me more than anything else had. You were Blomberg coming to get me; you were Doctor Westcountry coming to do something to me; you were Norway coming to 'cover' me; you were— Oh, you must think me a silly, hysterical thing, Mendal."

"*No.*"

Getting to his feet, Mendal thrust his hands deep in his pockets and then took them out again. Restless, he snapped the horn beside him as one tests a melon, and then as if appalled by the sudden sound, he glowered down at his boot toes. So he remained while the woman went on talking, as if to herself now, arms outspread and eyes on the ceiling, her voice scarcely audible above the wind:

"Perhaps I died that night, really, and this is another life. It's been so sweet here; it seems as long already as the other was, looking back—that other little life, so crowded, so empty, so happy, so sad! There were

triumphant moments in it, Mendal; I try to get hold of them now, and they slip away one by one as I come to them: mist, nothing. Only one stays, very small, so small that I had forgotten it till I lay here in the quiet sky. Just a man in the dark; a boy, really—a feverish boy crying for me to stop. It's like a fairy tale, where the thing that seemed so little eats up all the things that seem so big.

"'*Fleur d'Amour*' they called me. 'Flower of Love' that means, Mendal. Whatever would the Sunday papers have done without Mary Farnoe? What reams on reams they filled with their Farnoe, their queer, distorted Farnoe, whom I never knew. They never saw me. They tried so hard to make something out of me. They wanted me complex, and I couldn't be anything but simple; they made me a butterfly, and I was a rock for faith. I forgive them. I can begin to understand an all-forgiving God. It's so easy to forgive—in heaven. I can even forgive the men who never loved me. I can even smile at them now. They all thought they loved me, poor things! I've no doubt they loved something or other. Youth was what Tom Lord loved, I think. Bennington loved me for the crowds; Von Luhr because I was so essentially American; Belham because I was so essentially un-American. Terry Kew loved himself.

"I say, I forgive them. They slip away, mist, nothing: an hour eats up years. How I should have smiled then had any one told me I was to look back out of the future and remember that boy as the only lover of Mary Farnoe. It's queer, isn't it, Mendal?"

"What?"

"To call him that. When he never spoke a word of

love to me. I never saw him except once, and that in the dark; I don't so much as know his name. But why do you listen to my maunderings, Mendal? Why don't you stick your fingers in your ears? Haven't I asked enough of you, first and last?"

"No. I will listen."

"You won't hear. It's too phantasmal. Ships in the Night! It's just that he seems to fit in here with the wind and ocean and marshes and sea birds. He was an interne, I think. (Oh, just then I was getting well in a hospital, slowly, for when I was well I was to marry Von Luhr, and my wildness and fidgetings set me back.) He must have been an interne; he wore white, I remember, and looked like a ghost standing at the foot of my bed in the dark. I knew he had no business there, but oddly enough, that wasn't my thought. If he had a queer flair about me, perhaps I had a sort of one about him, too. It may have been just his attitude. At any rate my first impulse was to say aloud: 'You poor boy!'

"He started and stammered that he hadn't known I was awake. I don't believe there was ever such a queer conversation as that. It sounds inane, like a silly puzzle without an answer.

" 'Why do you do it?' he asked, out of nothing.

" 'Do what?'

"He wouldn't listen to my questions, but shook them off with a fevered impatience; his words seemed to get in the way of his thoughts.

" 'I wish you'd stop! I wish to God you'd stop!'

" 'Stop what?'

" 'They're eating you up—burning you up! Can't you see they're eating you up as fast as they can?'

" 'Who are?'

" 'I wish you'd run away from them,' he cried in a passionate whisper.

"I sat up in bed and stared at him. You can't imagine, Mendal, how weird it was. I wasn't frightened in the least. For an instant I'd been appalled at his cheek, but now not even that. I forgot who I was and who he was.

" 'Come around here beside the bed,' I said to him. He came, sank down on his knees, and buried his face in his hands, and when I laid a hand on his hair he was shivering all over. I had a sense of being a thousand years older than he.

" 'You poor, poor child,' I said. 'You've fallen in love with Mary Farnoe, like the rest of them. What a pity! And you want me to run away with you. Is that it?'

"He protested wildly. 'No, no, no! That's what I'm trying to tell you—*not with anybody!* Never let any one get a hold on you again. If only you could be turned to ice somehow. Ice, cold, quiet! Close the doors on them. Lock them out. They don't bring you anything! Always taking—taking you away, little by little, till one day there'll be nothing left of you!'

"He may have been older than I in years; I might have been his mother. I smoothed his hair, but I couldn't help smiling at him, he seemed so utterly outlandish. I tried to tell him how we weren't made that way; how what there was to spend had to be spent.

" 'You don't understand, poor lad,' I was saying when the night nurse's flash found him there beside my bed. He was discharged next morning, I heard.

"But there it is—quite round and finished, standing by itself."

For a time there was silence; everything in the world

seemed to have been said. Mary Farnoe's sentence had carried a curious feeling of finality, like the settling of a last account. She lay on her side with her hands clasped, searching Mendal's half-lowered face.

"Mendal!"

He looked up, moved by the change in her voice, and found her embarrassed as a girl with the color coming and going across her face.

"I—I don't seem to know how to say it, Mendal. You seem so big and solid and dependable; sometimes it almost frightens me to find myself clinging to you so for everything. And yet it's been so sweet. You've been like a breath of clear air to me after the other sort of thing—their precious frailties, their precious personalities, their precious spirits, their whims. I was always so afraid of doing something to make them not love me of a sudden. But out here, Mendal—why, you're Nobody. And I'm Nobody. It doesn't seem to matter much whether you—" She broke off and for a moment seemed in trouble for breath. "I don't want you to laugh at me," she implored.

"Laugh at you!"

"No. It's about the bell, out there at the last end of everything."

Mendal checked her there by putting out a hand and covered both of hers, and his eyes narrowed a little.

"You've been thinking about that bell a good deal lately."

"Oh, please, don't think I'm romantic or melodramatic. No; it's deeper than that, Mendal. It's *me*. I've always had that same passion, to carry through, to go through to the end, whatever it might be. Listen

Mendal! Hear! It knows me better than you do, Mendal."

"Do you mean," he put to her slowly, "that you would like to go out there tonight?"

Because she had expected him to be aghast at her, she was staggered by his grave possession. He got up and moved to the door, where he turned with his hand on the latch.

"Do you think you're strong enough, on a night like this?"

"Yes, yes! I feel stronger than I have for weeks."

"I'll be back in a minute."

It was more than sixty seconds before he came back into the room and stood over her, studying the face against the pillow.

"You look like a bride," he said.

Bending over suddenly, he wrapped the bedclothes tight about her, picked her up in his arms, and went downstairs and out of the house.

Once beyond the half shelter of the porch, the wind claimed them. Mendal's first rush carried him as far as the break of the hill, but there he hesitated and looked down at the face against his shoulder, dim-gray in its mufflings. His own face was gray, and a bead of perspiration clung for an instant on his forehead before the wind whisked it away.

"Do you want to go?" he asked, bending so that his lips were close to her ear.

"Am I heavy?"

He shook his head savagely.

"What's that, Mendal—over there?"

He followed the direction of her eyes, slanting over

his shoulder. Beyond Barnham Head Village the moon was rising, casting a dome of light before it into the sky, and vertically across this dome, from a further abutment of the hill, rose the stark black shape of a cross. "That?" he hesitated an instant. "That's the telegraph."

"But I didn't know—"

"It's come lately."

"Oh!" She studied his eyes for a moment, her lips still half parted with the exclamation, and then: "What difference does it make, after all? Why do we stop here so long, Mendal?"

He started down the slope, sliding and spattering the loose sand, waded through the bit of marsh at the bottom that sucked at his shoes, found the hard, uneven footing of the breakwater, and passed out once more into the wind.

It was one of those nights that come once or twice in an autumn, swept clean of all the dusts and mists of the world, everything shorn and incisive: even the sound of the water lashing through the crevices of the sea wall had an edged quality, like liquid blades playing in the rock. Mendal had to keep sharp watch of his path, for even in the growing light the tilted slabs were treacherous footing. When the arm about his neck tightened, begged his attention, he had to bring up and stand balanced against the wind. There was nothing left in his face now: his stare was dull, almost vacant.

"What is it?" he asked. He bent to catch her answer.

"I'm getting so small, Mendal, and you're growing bigger and bigger all the while. And I don't hear the bell any more. You—Mendal, you're not fooling me?"

"No!" His voice was sharp. "The surf at the head drowns it now. You won't hear it any more till we come up with it."

He went forward again. Her weight, frail as it was, began to tell. When he had reached the square-hewn bowlder rising like a sort of key-stone at the center of the wall, he had to pause a moment in its lee, resting his back against the rock.

"Is it here?" she asked him.

"No, no! I'm only getting my wind; that's all."

"Why don't you look at me, Mendal?"

For some reason or other it seemed an effort for him. For a moment she lay there watching him.

"Why won't you say it, Mendal?"

Her hand crept up to touch his cheek, and it was whiter now than her own.

"You would have said it, Mendal, if I hadn't told you about—about me. But what difference can that make—now—out here? The world's gone. We're all there are, Mendal; one man and one woman. But why should I want you to tell me, after all? It's so different from anything else that ever happened. I can love you to the last depths, Mendal, without its seeming so fatal a thing whether you love me or not. Of course that would be sweet, incredibly—"

He had forgotten to be careful with her or with himself. His kiss left them both shaken and breathless. "You—You—" He seemed unable to say anything but that: "You—You—You—"

He was going forward again, almost at a run. The breakwater came to an end: he was floundering up the rise to Barnham Head, one instant in the ice, the next,

crushed and deafened, face to face with the driven sea. Farnoe's fingers dragged at his cheek.

"Where is it, Mendal? Mendal!"

"Look!" He pulled the blanket away from her face. A puff of spray like cannon smoke drove across them, blinding the eyes.

"Look again!"

There was nothing to see, nothing to take hold of or comprehend. Grayness swooned into blackness; a thin, wide tongue lashed out of the smother, glistening with dim stars, clotted with ropes of spume: licked up at them across the sand with a sinister hunger; fell back again, leaving a serpent of kelp at Mendal's feet, writhing and faintly luminous.

"Look!" he shouted for the third time, shaking her. "Out there! Beyond!"

But she had turned her face the other way.

"Why do you do this? Mendal! Mendal! Why do you frighten me so? Why don't you take me to the bell?"

"I am! It's out there—over the outer bar. Come!"

He started down the shining slope, but now she was crying terribly in his ear: "*Mendal! Mendal! Mendal!*"

"Good God!" he shouted. "What's the matter?" Stumbling back again, he pushed her face away from his neck and stared into the staring eyes.

"*Don't you want to go?*"

They looked incredibly old, both of them! . . .

Somehow or other they were on higher ground and wire-grass was catching at Mendal's shoes and trying to trip him. He stumbled once and went down on one knee, but the sand was soft, and he did not lose hold

of his burden. A building with two yellow windows came around a hummock to meet them.

It was hard for Mary Farnoe to remember what happened after that for a time. Whatever it was it led to a kind of bed built into the side of a small room filled with papers and outlandish instruments and warmth and light.

Some one had hold of one of her wrists. She began to realize that it was Mendal and that his eyes, fixed and unwinking, were holding her up out of something. There were others in the room: an old man with a blue coat and gray whiskers puffing out from his chin like an inverted halo; still other men behind him.

"Where am I?" she asked with her lips, for she seemed to have no voice.

Mendal's eyes came down a little closer, still holding her tight.

"You're at Barnham Head, Mary Farnoe: at the life-saving station."

"I'm so weak. Dear me, so w-e-a-k."

"Of course you're weak, like a babe on its birth night. You'll be stronger by and by. Do you understand? Stronger by and by!"

Without moving his eyes, he gave some word or sign that sent the others out of the room, the captain last, combing his whiskers with his fingers and peering over his shoulder with a light of awe.

"The broth," Mendal called after him. And then to Mary Farnoe: "Open your mouth and swallow this. It's a little brandy. There!"

She lay quiet as death itself, watching him with the formless wonder of a newborn watching a candle flame.

He began to speak with a painful deliberation, holding himself desperately in hand, making each word count as a separate thing, hammering, hammering!

"Mary Farnoe, listen! *You couldn't go through.* You failed in that rôle; that gesture is gone. I proved it to you. You had hold of a fine fancy there; a deep, dramatic symbolism—Land's End, Eternal Ocean, the Bell calling, calling, day and night, from the bosom of Oblivion. Good God! I don't wonder it got hold of that fantastic spirit of yours. A big idea—yes, yes. *But it fell flat.* Now you're starting all over again, on something new. It's a shock—birth is always a shock. Listen, Mary Farnoe! I want you to understand this; learn it by heart; it's the lines of your new rôle: *There is absolutely nothing organically wrong with you now.* That was all over two weeks ago. In a month you will be yourself. Do you get this, word by word? No, no; don't look away from me. You couldn't if you tried. That's better! Here's another swallow of the brandy, and then a little broth. You'll see how thoroughly I have it over you; the captain here will tell you I 'phoned about this broth before we left the house an hour ago. I'll hold you up a moment, so!"

The spirits and hot broth began to tell; a new color crept into her cheeks as she lay there, with no will of her own.

"You talk so queerly, Mendal; so different, so new. I—I hardly know you, Mendal." It may have been five minutes before she spoke again. "Why did they give me three weeks to live, then?"

"Three weeks as you were living then—on your heart and nerve."

"Why didn't you tell me before, Mendal—that I was all right?"

"What would have been the use? You wouldn't have believed me. No, no, Mary Farnoe; I don't think you'd believe anything in the world unless the stage were set for it—as if—well, you wouldn't have your life saved except in a life-saving station. Truth is a dénouement —or it is nothing."

Another minute passed while she gazed at him dreamily.

"Will I sing again, Mendal?"

"That's on the knees of the gods, Mary"—he tried to smile—"the gallery gods! You'll do what your audience expects of you, even the impossible."

"But M-e-n-d-a-l—" A hand came toward him across the covers, appealing.

"You remember what you said once, Mary? 'What's to be spent must be spent'?"

"But what if I was wrong, Mendal?"

He looked terribly tired and white. His hands lay palms upward on his thighs, and for a moment his eyes went heavily from one to the other, as if he were weighing something against something. "And what if you were right?" he said.

He got up suddenly, as if he were afraid of himself, and, turning to a telephone on the wall, took down the receiver: "Is this the Barnham Head House? . . . May I speak with— Oh, is it you, Blomberg? Yes? We've turned the corner, Blomberg. May I speak with Norway? . . . Thanks!"

It was hard to wait there, staring at a knot in the

paneling; he seemed actually to grow whiter and gaunter with every dragging second.

"Oh, hello! hello! Norway? . . . It's Westcountry speaking, Norway. I'll give you a leader, Norway; put it on the wire tonight. 'Farnoe will sing in three months.' That's all. . . . Thanks. Thanks, Norway. Good night!"

"Now," he said, his eyes still on the knot, "now you're playing to the old audience again. I'm tired," he went on. "And I'm afraid to look at you."

"Westcountry," came her wondering voice. "Westcountry! You're—you're *Westcountry!*"

"You're angry!"

When she didn't speak he had to cover up the silence somehow.

"Blomberg will be glad to get away. Poor Blomberg! the Barnham Head House isn't quite up to Blomberg's style, though he's been a surprising brick about it. And Norway. How they've played chess down there, and how they hate chess! I've wanted them to go, but they wouldn't. They were the ones you saw in the buggy with me that night. That was my train that came in between you and yours. It took us a little while to pick up your trail. Mary, Mary, if you knew how I'd dreaded this moment, when I should have to tell you."

"Why?"

He had to look at her when she spoke so, and now it was his eyes that were bewildered and hers sure and full of light.

"I was afraid it might—Mary, can't you see that—what you called the 'balcony hung over the edge'—'one woman and one man—nobody and nobody'—"

"Was that sweet to you, too?"

"Sweet? Is it sweet when a dream comes true, even for a little while—a dream one's been alone with for ten years? Once I knelt in the dark, Mary, beside a bed in a hospital, very young and foolish and feverish—"

And there he was down on his knees again with his face buried in her hands, and she was smiling at him again, but not because he was outlandish this time.

"I knew," she whispered. "I began to know almost a week ago. Do you know how? Well, there couldn't be two of you. I—I thought you were going to tell me tonight."

Her lips were against his cheek.

"Does that mean, Mary—that kiss—that it doesn't matter, after all? That even without my romantic trappings: rather gray and prosaic—"

Her low laughter was like a caress.

"The sea must be going down," she whispered after a long time. "I heard the bell, just then, very faintly."

"Yes! The bell's a masquer too. It's gone back to the rôle that made it famous—warning people off the bar."